

THE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

# WIRE



ISSUE 186 AUGUST 99 • £2.80 / US \$6.50

## **Tony Oxley**

Kicking against  
the pricks

## **Far East freakout**

A user's guide  
to Japanese  
psychedelia

## **Sculpting sound**

David Toop on the  
music of machines

**Blixa  
Bargeld's**  
jukebox

**Piano Magic**

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# THE WIRE

ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

Issue 186 August 1999

£2 Bon/£6.50 USA/£9.50-£10.00 (USPS 006721)

46-46 Poland Street • London W1V 3DF • UK

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Cover photo of Scanner in London: **Tim Kent**

Assistant thanks the issue to Peter Shapiro

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# editor's idea

**M**y watch and tread bones are insisting that it's one o'clock in the morning, but outside it's virtually broad daylight, and the tented street in front of the hotel is rammed with families cavorting like they were on a Sunday afternoon picnic.

So, we've hit the north, then Norway to be precise. Or to be even more precise, Kongsberg. This picture-postcard burg is too tiny to show up on any map we see, but we find it anyway, two hours' drive north of Oslo.

In the UK, an equivalent village might be an isolated hamlet in the middle of the Cotswolds. But Kongsberg is different enough to have hosted an international jazz festival for 35 years running. This year, the festival's organisers have scooped enough hard cash from Norway's apparently bottomless pit of public arts funding to ship over Herbie Hancock, Tinsley, Marc Ribot, a duo of Paul Bley and Tony Oxley — and The Wire.

A delegation from Poland St HQ has been invited to Kongsberg to give a presentation on this very magazine what it is, what it does, and why and how it does it. The audience, we are told, will be made up of delegates to the festival drawn from the Norwegian music industry. Now it should go without saying that ordinarily I'd run a mile from such a brief, but for some reason, this one felt like a good idea. (And the astronomical fee on offer had absolutely no bearing on that decision, OK?)

I didn't feel so good once we arrived, however, and had been seeing the billing for our little chawwig by the festival's director, Tore Flesja. "The Wire Story," it said on the posters. "Bringing Music To The Segments." OK, allowing for the fact that something might have been lost in the translation there, I think I know what that means, but just in case, Tore, help me out here.

No worries. It turns out that we are talking specialisation, the fragmentation of the global music industry into numerous niche markets (or, rather, segments), the ways those markets can feed and nurture each other when brought together under the banner of Adventures In Modern Music, and so on and so forth. Well all right, we are still on the same wavelength, more or less. That's what The Wire is all about — its 'story' even. I can talk about that stuff till the mooses come home.

But as it also transpires, Tore has misread our audience somewhat. The next day we assume our positions behind a line of tables at one end of a hotel

conference room that might as well have been in Bora Bora for all its attention to local detail. But instead of a delegation of music activists eager for discourse and the latest word from London on modern music's fragmented communities, we are faced down by an assembly maybe 40 strong, most of whom appear to be the kind of stem-faced North European jazz critic whose attitude to music is so fundamentalist they make Ayatollah Khomeini look like a limp-winded liberal.

Suddenly, the idea of opening the presentation with a film clip of DJ Q-Bert demonstrating his scorching skills doesn't feel like such a good idea. In the clip, Q-Bert's description of an ageing, anonymous trad jazz clarinetist as the world's "dope scratcher" was most definitely lost in the translation. The audience sat stone-faced as the DJ went through his jaw-dropping routine of flares, crabs, transforms and backspins. Opting to follow the Q-Bert clip by playing a track off Rhys Chatham's nu-fusion album *Hard Edge* was also a mistake possibly given the company. When the track ended, the silence was more deafening than the sound of Rhys's hyperventilating electric trumpet shredding the dead air of the conference room like a scimitar.

Sensing that the central issue here had nothing to do with bringing music to the segments, and everything to do with my magazine, which was once perceived as a bastion of jazz journalism, now stacks faceless Techno bollox on its covers, I abandon my prepared text and improvise. Taken together, I explain, the two examples we have just seen and heard go some way towards defining the musical world of The Wire and jazz's place within it. On the one hand, you have an example of individual artistry rising out of collective endeavour (that would be Q-Bert in *Invault Scratch Pixid*), and with *Hard Edge*, you have an instance of musicians from diverse backgrounds using jazz as an open form able to flex and reconcile a multitude of inputs.

But it's no good. With weary inevitability, the main questions from the floor concern the spectre of 'computer' music: why does it all sound the same? Well, it doesn't, unless you are of the opinion that anything outside of a Jan Garbarek session is homogenous pap. I thought this was a battle that had been won and lost ages ago, but obviously not. Should I worry? With an appearance fee the size of a small fridge safely in my pocket, absolutely not. **TONY HERINGTON**

The September issue of The Wire will be on sale: Tuesday 31 August

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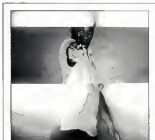
# letters

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## Ugly rumour

As my girlfriend pointed out, it can't be *The Wire* that has just arrived, the person on the cover (Carl Craig, issue 185) is too good-looking! Inside too, there doesn't seem to be the usual collection of ugly muses peering out or staring with evil-looking eyes. In fact, dare I say it, they all look respectable! What does this say about the music, though, is it pretty too? I thought you had to be ugly to make interesting music!

**Andrew Brooks Dundee**



## Ballistic missive

Regarding the opening moments of your Carl Craig story (*The Wire* 185) I'm not sure what to be more worried by: Carl's desire to be pictured welding a gun, or *The Wire* photographic team's apparent ability to lay their hands on such a thing at a moment's notice.

**Phil Murray Rochdale**

## Fingerin' the usual suspects

Congratulations Andy Medhurst for the inspired postcard of Scanner in Soundcheck (*The Wire* 185), the boy's been due a light slapping ever since he first pretended to invent found sound and then lost his sense of humour (spare the rod, I say).

*The Wire* seems to be increasingly pointing an incommensurate finger at the po-faced nodders of the music world and this should be wholeheartedly welcomed. While I'm occasionally prone to the odd bit of serenity and contemplation (just try to imagine taking Anni Parf), it's a welcome relief to see older experimental bands like Nurse With Wound, Coil and Current 93 finally being written about as if they are philosophically separate from

all the Throbbing Gristle copyists that churned out 'My Dad's bigger than yours' nonsense in the mid-80s (it is a pity about Genesis P-Orridge though, isn't it? Bless him). I think it's worth an article discussing the humorous side of many of these 'serious' bands — I mean, could there ever be a funnier band than Throbbing Gristle with Abba, Tescos, crappy jumpers on the one hand, and burn victims, white noise and serial killers on the other? And Coil's Love's Secret Domain must be one of the only attempts at 'sensory derangement' on record that actually accepts that derangement is kind of fun, does nobody else actually take drugs?

On this theme, the review of the latest Nurse With Wound album (same issue) was spot on — anyone who thinks he's selling out by using guitars (shock!) should spend some time with Ant. 'N' Dec. For fun one day, just go into Rough Trade and giggle as the Industrial miserablists have another go at trying to reconcile the Nurse With Wound covers with the music — it's like watching disappointed Little Chief diners looking at the food on the display boards. The review of Holger Czukay, though, betrayed a rather doleful acceptance of the idea that humour means lack of prestigesuccess. Perhaps this is true in Holger's case (his jokes are pretty crap), but the implication seemed to extend to this kind of music in general — surely not? And using Can as a counterpoint — you're not telling me they were being serious?

**Saxon Roach North Preston**

## Festival cheers

Re the recent LMC Festival I have no quarrel with Julian Cowley's review of the event (*On Location*, *The Wire* 185), but I would like to record some of my own feelings about it. It was my first real exposure to live music of the type written about in *The Wire* — after first being attracted by the Robert Fripp interview a couple of years back, I have descended the slippery slope of *Wire* addiction, recently going so far as to become a subscriber. While my CD collection has been expanding with the likes of Masada, Derek Bailey, Herbie Hancock's *Sextant*, Squarepusher (etc, etc), prompting ever more extreme groans from my friends whenever I try to put a record on, my live experience of anything more adventurous than Kula Shaker has been non-existent — until the LMC Festival. I didn't love it, but it was a diverse and eye-opening introduction to a world of music that speaks to places most people don't even realise exists. Particularly stunning were Eugene Chadbourne, and Pierre Henry's second piece, which, far from being a product of 'latterday creative input', spoke to me powerfully on both intellectual and visceral levels.

One final point: one of my enduring memories of the festival is Otono Yoshitake and Sachiko M rushing up to Joe Banks (aka Disinformation) after his performance to see what equipment he was using. It struck me as well that different from the kid staring intently at Noel Gallagher's fingers to cop his chords, and made me think that one of the most wonderful things about music is the sense of community it can generate, at the cutting edge just as much as anywhere else.

Anyway, thanks to the LMC for four great evenings, and to *The Wire* for making me aware of them.

**Dominic Lash Cambridge**

The review of my Disinformation sub-bass set at the LMC Festival was spot on in observing that this enterprise is "experimental in a laboratory sense, and only music incidentally". Unfortunately, this statement is the kind of insight most reviews of Disinformation start with, rather than build up to: interpreting the sound from an acoustics point of view, the only difference between the stand-alone waves set up in Filament's set and those constructed in Disinformation's were the wavelengths of the signals involved — they did theirs at very high frequencies, while Disinformation's were very low. This fact wasn't lost on everybody — Otono and Sachiko came up afterwards and made some very nice comments indeed.

Inevitably the brain tends to interpret low-frequency interference patterns as rhythms rather than sub-bass, and the individual pools of local sound texture inside the auditorium are correspondingly larger. Since the audience was obliged to sit still and not physically explore these effects in 3D space, it was necessary to play the apparatus a little to try and shift these pools around the audience instead.

I can understand that the reviewer found the sound oppressive — many people describe these sensations as hypnotic and relaxing, while others — well, the management of the Volksbühne in Berlin threatened to call the police. These risks come with the territory, but how he managed to interpret "deep waves pulsing up through the floor and coursing through your body" as an expression of "existential angst" is mystifying to say the least.

Finally, just as it was a real pleasure to be programmed by the LMC alongside such an amazing array of musicians, it's also cool to see one's work charting in *The Wire*. However, the track mentioned in issue 185 doesn't exist. Maybe by '88 you meant Touch's new Android: compiler's electromagnetic noise track '94 DC Supply With Homemade Copper Solenoid'? This recording (based on an experiment devised by the German electrical engineer Hermann Barkhausen) features a 9V battery, two Smarthen tubes, a tape recorder and about

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four metres of copper wire. Authorship was limited to wiring the Smarties, winding the coils and pressing 'Record' — the battery is the real star.  
**Joe Banks (aka Disinformation)** London

## No Trousers press

I was truly puffed off that The Magic Trousers performance at the Totally Huge New Music Festival in Perth was not included in the review (On Location, *The Wire* 185). This group of noisicians from Perth have been doing it far longer and better than any of the other local acts included and largely ignored by the masses (thankfully). But your failure to include them in your review shows how apathetic the public seems to be in this little city. When are they going to get the recognition they deserve for their critique of the music industry in Australia (and the world), their social and cultural awareness and their sheer lack of inhibitions to express a truth through sonic abuse? Let me guess: in about 30 years' time — or perhaps when some smartarse kid with good looks figures out how to copy them and decides to 'invent' their brand of Postpop Anythinggoes Music. Shame on you.  
**Abraham Dumovits** Perth, Western Australia

## Gen-eration games

Once upon a time there was a 15 year old boy who discovered a quite exciting sound called 'Industrial Music'. This sound, which was so new and challenging, became right away a subject for his curiosity, and so the boy left his post-punk records in the dust, starting a devoted search that would take some more years. On yes, he discovered many groups and weird characters such as Monte Cazazza, Boyd Rice and Marc Pauline, but mainly he discovered Throbbing Gristle and Genesis P-Orridge. This last became immediately a reference and a true hero for the boy, with his magnetic personality and his crazy dark humour.

Later, the youngster continued his voyage of discovery with Psychic TV and The Temelie Or Psychic Youth and the pagan philosophies, consolidating Genesis, the paranoid angel, as an idol to be followed. With the passing years, reading and hearing these psychic messages, the boy embraced the Gnostic and vegetarianism and hallucinogenic drugs and other esoteric views of the world. With 19 years now, Genesis P-Orridge had really changed his life, as true idols do anyway.

The years went on, until the boy read an interview with Genesis in *The Wire* 182 and a concert report in issue 184. It was all so strange. The impression that he kept it that, after all these years, it had all been a farce, or at least it wasn't as serious as he thought it was. Could it really have been just a 'hoax'?

Now, he had really grown. He had a lovely partner and a child of two months. He still believed in some things he had discovered with Genesis P-Orridge, but he was certain of one point: this idol no longer exists!  
**Nuno Loureiro** Coimbra, Portugal

## Tools you can trust

Firstly, congratulations on your intelligent and informative magazine. It was wonderful to see your article on Akira Rabelas (Multimedia, *The Wire* 183), perhaps this will open up the ground for introducing artists such as Trevor Wishart and Barry Truax to your readers in the future. There are many artists working at this tool development level — they are creating what will become the 'instruments' of the future. The Internet as a platform for the freeshareware distribution of these programs is allowing these 'instruments' to develop from the feedback of a wide variety of practitioners in many different situations, unlike the rather more hermetic development of the instruments of the past.

I am researching this field for my PhD, and it is a joy to see one of the people that I frequently mention to colleagues being publicly acknowledged. At last I have something to show them when I am accused of banging on about nerdy sound software. You've made my day! Keep it up.

**Robert Rowlands** via e-mail

## Fallen standards

Very disappointed that Tony Hemmington let Mark E Smith get away with trying to rewrite Fall history again (*The Wire* 183). Whatever happened to investigative journalism? And by the way, the name of the new band formed by ex-Fall members is ARK.

**Steve Hanley (ARK)** via e-mail

## Felt good

I usually find the letters where readers write in griping to be rather pointless — if you don't like the magazine, don't buy it. However, as a subscriber I feel like I have some vested interest. I've already paid for my future copies so I'm going to moan about the recent absence of the back-page Ephraim's article. Most of us listen to music for reasons that are personal and emotional despite all the intellectual analysis. Ephraim's nicely acknowledged this, and was a fine read to boot. I especially enjoyed the pieces by Jeff Noon (*The Wire* 178) and Rob Young (173). I was also at the third of the Felt shows Rob mentioned and funny enough left with exactly the same impression.

Quite apart from anything else, there's something pleasing about having the inside back page contain the last article as opposed to advertising.

**Mark Winkelmann** Dublin, Ireland

We couldn't agree more, and so this month, the Ephraim's column returns to its rightful place on the back page. — Ed

## Eagle eyes

I wish someone there kept a closer watch on the jazz/improv scene. In his review of two Vandermark 5 CDs and one Jeb Bishop CD (*The Wire* 185), for

instance, Julian Cowley says that the Okkadisk trio CD is Jeb Bishop's solo debut. It isn't. An excellent set of Bishop's duets, with among others, Mats Gustafsson, Fred Lonberg-Holm, Ken Vandermark, Leo Smith and Hamid Drake, entitled *Duets 98*, came out on the Wobbly Rail label last year. That's the same company that has even placed small ads in *The Wire* over the past couple of years. Just setting the record straight.  
**Ken Waxman** via e-mail

We like to think we keep a closer watch on the jazz/improv scene than most magazines, for instance. Jeb Bishop's new Okkadisk CD with Joe McPhee, *The Brass City*, is reviewed in this month's *In Brief* Jazz column. Moreover, *Duets 98* was reviewed (favourably) in *The Wire* 180. It must have slipped our minds for a moment, is all. — Ed

Cynosity has got the better of me. For many months now John Peel has been broadcasting on Radio 1 from 10.10pm to midnight, yet you list his programme as being broadcast at an earlier time, long out of date. Are you monitoring responses like this every month just to see if we're paying attention?

**Terry Edwards** via e-mail

Yes. Ed

## Vinyl word

I write in the hope of eliciting the help of your readers in a project I will be realising in Glasgow this October. As part of a week of events organised by artists in the city under the title *Educated In Reverse*, I will be presenting *Educated By Vinyl*, a DJ set at the end of the century. What I need are suggestions for this set records that have opened audience's minds, innovated and influenced the sound of 2000. The set needs to be about three hours long and is intended to cover all styles. Please send suggestions for individual records or complete sets.

**Michael Wilkinson** O/T, 16 Murano Street, Glasgow G20 7RS

## Corrections

Issue 185: In Bites, US Maple guitarist Mark Shipoy was inadvertently re-christened Pat Shipoy. In the Label Directory, the contact address for The Ghost Orchid's *An Introduction To Electronic Voice Phenomenon* CD, which is released by Ash International (RIP) not the Parapsychic Acoustic Research Cooperative as stated, should have been listed as 13 Oswald Road, London SW17 7SS.

Issue 184: In the review of the No Music Festival II (On Location), we managed to spell the names of both Masafuku Ohno and the reviewer Monica Kendrick incorrectly. The way they are written here is right. Issue 182: In Soundcheck, we stated that the Terry Fox LP *Benito Alarandino* was deleted. It is in fact still available direct from Het Apollonius, Tongelreestraat 81, NL 5613 DB Eindhoven, The Netherlands.

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# bites

## Piano Magic

### In the doll's house

Piano Magic make strange, time-frozen soundtracks to films that exist only in flickers on the back of your brain. Their song, "Wrong French", opens with the sound of a distant, creeping organ buried beneath rainfall, as a startling little girl voice reminisces about "those films, made in the '70s, where dolls ran through fields, late at night, after men."

Other than Jac Berrocal, the French avant-prankster, it's hard to think of anyone with as strong a grasp of surreal sonic scenery as Glen Johnson, the faceless brains behind Piano Magic. "We do actually use 'real adult' women for vocals,"

Johnson says. "However, we don't manipulate their voices in the slightest — that is the way they speak and sing. I'm aware that the voices are unique and I'm fortunate to know people with voices like that. I did really want a doll to sing on "Wrong French", but aside from those you get with the drawing you put in their backs, it was just impossible."

Johnson's world of macabre doll voices and musical sleight of hand does indeed parallel the chilling landscapes of such '70s movies as *Don't Look Now* and *Wages Of The Damned*. His songs can sound nostalgic for a decade that seemed obsessed with a multitude of imminent apocalypses. Paradoxically, Johnson claims the music was born of another, more innocent time.

"Really I was an '80s kid," he says. "I like to think that 'Wrong French' lives more in the films of the Brothers Quay, Jan Svankmajer and David Lynch's *The Grandmother*." Appropriately enough, the cover of the new Piano Magic album, *Low Birth Weight*, features four stuffed cats passing round tea and buns, an image that could have come from Czech surrealist Svankmajer's puppet version of *Alice in Wonderland*.

"The cats are from Potter's Museum of Curios in Devon," Johnson explains. "It's a freaky Victorian museum of stuffed animals arranged as humans — smoking and reading. There's something mighty fucked about that scenario. I always choose photographs which I think complement the music, there's an attention to detail which runs throughout everything I do."

Johnson's obsession with the minutiae of the actual recording process results in tracks filled with slight

federal intricacies worked over again and again, leaving little to spontaneously. His working methods owe a lot to the studio-bound techniques of My Bloody Valentine's Kevin Shields. A track like "Snowfall Soon" could easily have slotted onto MBV's *Isn't Anything*. Even the title is perfect.

"That's been pointed out a lot," Johnson admits. "But it's not intentional at all. I was a fan of My Bloody Valentine up until *Isn't Anything*. A couple of years before he was being heralded as some kind of genius, but I don't believe he is. The greatest influence on me, in terms of production, is Kraftwerk — the impeccably laid layers, no straggly ends."

Johnson grew up during the '70s in Pinatton, a tiny ex-mining village on the Derbyshire border, which he compares to being "born straight into Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night And Sunday Morning*."

"The first music I seriously got into was the whole Two-Tone thing, particularly The Specials," he continues. "It was the first stuff I really felt passionate about and the first time I really acknowledged melancholy in songs. At 12, that sort of despondency seems both confusing and exciting."

An emigrating sense of melancholy fuels *Low Birth Weight*, nowhere more so than in the dramatic drizzle of "Bad Patient." "We fuck in sadness," deadpans the same doll voice that appears on "Wrong French." "A cold frustration/Then we're fine for a while/Our hearts adjacent."

Unlikely as it sounds, Johnson often draws on members of bog standard UK indie groups — the likes

Wall of sound: Piano Magic



of The Bitter Springs, Baby Brken and The Wisdom Of Harry — for musical back-up, though he admits that he doesn't feel much kinship with his collaborators. "It's just a case of knowing some of those groups," he sighs. "I don't necessarily like what they do. In fact, I spend a small portion of every day complaining about UK post-Tortoise syndrome to whoever will listen. The three bass/mid rock equation dulls my brain. It's just gone too far. It's as bad as groups wanting to sound like The Beatles. I think groups should stop listening to anything for six months and then go into the studio and write. That's where the new shit's going to come from — ignorance."

His assessment helps explain Pano Magic's incompatibility with almost all other current UK music. Their nursery rhyme melodies unfold over distant, shimmering electronics, songlines mingle with distorted dialogue and eerie mood pieces. However, their hermeticism has something in common with the likes of Current 93 and Coil, who blissfully follow their own way without worrying where everybody else is going.

"I think we're prone for cupboard dwellers," Johnson concludes on a cryptic note. "From the outside, you can hear the heart beating within."

**DAVID KEENAN** Low Birth Weight is out now on Popular Mechanics

## snd

### Byte-size breadcrumbs

"I would say snd is the kind of music I would like to hear as I am putting my coat in the cloakroom and entering the club," dreams Mark Fell, who formed the Sheffield duo with Mat Steel. "But then, I don't think it works that well at high volumes, and I would probably start moaning after about three minutes. So hopefully there's this opposition between being engaged and alienated."

With time codes for track titles, cover designs that suggest an anorexic, Designers Republic, and a disemvoweled name, snd might seem to be the latest carpetbagger on the laptop frontier. But one listen to their first album, *Makesnd* Cassette, suggests that they have a lot more up their sleeves than simply a handful of plug-ins. They first appeared on transporter radar last fall with "Tplay," a nearly anonymous 12" that sounded something like Pole producing lullabies. As the tracks of laundromat dub was followed by the *Newtobles* EP, which updated the bell tones and hollow kicks with an ethered-up House feel. On *Makesnd* Cassette, snd bring their early sketches to realisation by judiciously thinning out the tracks even more. The results sound like a thimbleful of mercury slicked across two records, sliding over itself, shimmering into new forms of opiate ambience, as much morph as morphine. Their repetition and panning processes suggest a minimalist ethic.

"Yes, you could call it minimal," agrees Fell. "Maybe uncultured is a better word — perhaps even bdy! Yes, snd is neat and bdy." Tidy perhaps, but don't expect antiseptic austerity. Silted noise permeates everything, sonic dust motes scattered by the whirling of a hard disk.

"The file extension '.snd' means sound resource," elaborates Fell. "So it's kind of like the whole thing is no more than the contents of a folder on a hard drive. We're not really that anal about computers," he stresses, "but I do like the idea of the work having a location, a home. Over the process of several records, this home gets more furniture."

Working with tools such as Cubase and Logic has focused their attentions on the process of composition. "The process is so removed from the way you might listen to music — from the beginning to the end, rather than as the possible combinations of a number of layers," Fell says. "Perhaps the whole idea of making music as a series of isolated judgments is problematic. So we find working with such applications both problematic and, because of this, quite interesting and open to exploration."

Unlike the many electronics types who are boggled about their choice of tools, snd are happy to reveal they are working with Max, an object-oriented application originally developed by IRCAM, to fashion new interfaces for generating and manipulating sounds and structures. Fell cites an interest in the relationship between cause and effect, and a desire to bring real-time interaction to computer music. "A really simple instrument triggers a sound when you press a key," he



Walk this way: snd

says, "but what appeals to us is that this relationship can become indefinitely extended, so that the user derives a sense of changing what's happening, but that this is never quite completely understood or defined or controllable. Like not being able to completely master an instrument."

The duo put their ideas about space, time, and interactivity into effect at an installation at a Sheffield public swimming pool, where they placed motion sensors at one end of a long corridor and strung speakers along the walls. "As people passed, their movements were dislocated along the corridor," Fell explains. "We were really interested in growing the sound into the space, so captured movements were repeated over and over until by the end of the day, the whole corridor was inhabited by complex tones and patterns." For Fell, the pool project addressed "the relationship between touch and sound and how we can develop the map between the two."

In terms of sound and procedure, snd's tracks are polished, transparent solids, meant to be seen through in four dimensions, grasped in space and glimpsed in time simultaneously. But don't call it process music, warns Fell. "The thing is, when you start to talk about how the process and the outcome are related, you start to get into really tricky ideas. In a traditional situation, if you're playing a guitar, what's the process? What's the outcome? Talking in terms of form and content isn't any use to us. It's just like some outmoded marketing speak."

Theoretical score points aside, snd's music of minute changes bears concentrated listening. If their compositional approach is like "trying to define a sound or pattern that you never get quite right, so you keep having to go back to it," *Makesnd* Cassette exercises a magnetic pull, drawing the listener into a space of subtle variations, like a maze that shifts with each step.

"snd is a slow process of exploration, like finding your way round a new environment," concludes Fell. "We're not doing some pseudo scientific thing. It's more like leaving a trail of breadcrumbs." **PHILIP SHEERBURNE** *Makesnd* Cassette is out now on Mille Plateaux



# Pence Eleven

## Soul sonic farce

"What might happen if you experienced an my-life without knowing what it was?" asks Stuart Calton, guitarist with Pence Eleven and label honcho at Middle Class Records. "Would it still be funny? And if it was ritualized and turned into a song, what effect would it have when you took away the context you need to understand it? You're left with the object that exists in a weird sort of realm."

Pence Eleven are based in the Cambridgeshire Fens — an unlikely location, perhaps, for a group which resurrects the land of art-pop radicalism pioneered by Robert Wyatt. What makes them striking apart from Calton's chopping guitar and Nathan Blunt's taut pop/soul basslines — is the spotlight and mic trained on their onstage computer. They may as well have their placard reading, "Down with Expressions!" The lyrics collate modern trivia in a way that suggests scraps and litter might suddenly reveal a crucial truth. The was what drove Kurt Schwitters to piece together his all-encompassing *Merzba*, an art built of jokes you don't get.

In a similar spirit, Pence Eleven have written songs called "Why Is Saint Sebastian A Gay Icon?" (a Pea With The Face Of A Tiny Screaming Buddha) and "I Am Hunted By People Called Sandra." They form a dream continuum with New York collage Paul Pinochio and UK musicians such as Evil Dick, Dogbar and Kenny Process Team. The post-slacker, kitchen sink, DIY Dada exemplism. Their aesthetic swallows Oliver Messiaen and Eusebio and The Mascara Snake and Tony Oxley's 4 Compositions For Severn like a last and bulbous jelly. How

could their hometown, Wisbech, incubate such horrors?

"Culturally, East Anglia is a desert... rather like the Mojave," replies Calton. Nathan Blunt expands "I've had moments in the Fens when you're out and the clouds are so big, like battleships, and you feel so tiny. It's got a really high suicide rate. People in farmhouses on their own looking out on fields that are really dead. They just kill themselves. Witches are buried in the ditches to keep the sea from reclaiming the land. The Fens, it's really good!"

The remarkable thing about Pence Eleven is the unexpected juxtaposition of confessional angst, rigorously crafted modern pop and bizarre sonic surprise. They're rhythmically tight, too. Both Calton and Blunt used to be drummers — now they let the computer do the work. "I rate Gary Dwyer from The Teardrop Explodes," says Calton. "He pointed out to me that you should treat the drums as another instrument and write down the drum part." Now, with the computer supplying the necessary beats, they can export out from. "We'd like to be a pop group in the same way as Prince — only without any of the sex or enjoyment or fun or funk."

According to Calton, Middle Class Records was named "to celebrate how limited we are." Perhaps in an attempt to bridge the art-pop divide, Pence Eleven have brought labelmate Dallas Boner along to the interview. He's a hardcore HipHop/free jazz/Country man. He makes his music povera by speeding Marmite and Texpec on CDs that come free with Future Music. His *Plate Mine A Boner!* CD sounds like a rawler, leaser, electric version of the sonic interference that Matt Wand (from Stock,hausen & Walkman) contributed to free improv in the early 90s. At 24, Dallas is two years older than Calton and Blunt. He's from Hull, the non-middle-class hard man of the label. "You see, Pence Eleven are against the idea of rock," he says. "You get it with science fiction too, the idea that 'dark' equals integrity. They're trying to reclaim pop's brightness."

What Nathan Blunt loves about pop is the way it sacralises the details of everyday life. "There is a huge group of people that would actually care what colour socks Paul McCartney wore on 12 June 1965," he marvels. "That's the really cool thing you can do, being a pop star or a rock star." Calton adds: "The fact that we haven't got an audience doesn't stop us from

pretending. It's like composing for the drawer, a conceptual continuity thing."

Dallas, why are you associating with these demented post-beats who think they're as big as The Beatles?

"By some weird freak of things we found each other, the only people I've ever met who like the same music!" he replies. "I did some musical activity in a technical way, but I got to some kind of level where I realised that it wasn't something that interested me. Not that I'm the kind of wazzuck that thinks Derek Bailey doesn't tune his guitar, but Bailey's gone way beyond technique into another realm. For me, Derek Bailey and Cecil Taylor are the pinnacle. There's no rules about how you make music." **BEN WATSON** Pence Eleven's *How The Nimrods Stopped Me Smiling* and Dallas Boner's *Make Mine A Boner!* are out now on Middle Class Records.

## hitstream

**Uninvited #1** In July, a van loaded all of **Sonic Youth's** touring equipment was stolen from outside a motel in Orange County, California. The van's contents included amps, drums, tools, and the group's famously customized guitars (the loss of these latter items is a bit like Harry Partridge's self-built instruments going up in smoke). The group's quest that anyone with any clue as to the whereabouts of this most distinctive clubber should contact 001 212 343 2314, or e-mail [Musicos96@att.com](mailto:Musicos96@att.com) — all information will be treated in the strictest confidence. **+++ Cremewitch #2** Another alleged case of theft was highlighted recently when German electro-scientist **Dr. Aimo** released a new CD called *Man Make Motion* on Milla Plateaux. According to ambient world watchers, the record is an illegitimate release of **Tetsu Inoue's** *Show And Low* CD, which was released on **Pete Namlook's** label in 1995. It's still not clear if this was an error, a prank or an act of pure evil. Get some of you are spying, attention, anyway. **+++**

Following Steve Reich's recent *Reverend Project*, David Lozano's recording is **Pauline Oliveros's** the latest mammal-powered to get the makeover treatment. **Oliveros** lives in the *Army Of Obsolete* features new mixes of Oliveros's live performances by the Argentinian group *Reynolds*. According to its CV, Reynolds has released more than 30 CDs since forming in Buenos Aires in 1993, and its activities have included "concerts for plants, tributes to dry ice, psychic energy retractions with sociobrazing, and a symphony for 10,000 chickens!" It's amazing what some people get up to. **+++ Senseo** An on-line forum about the relationship between sound and space, which up at the beginning of August. Live e-mail chat groups have been hosted by David Toop, Maryanne Amacher, Stockhausen associate Rolf Gehlhaar, Kaffe Matthews, Ansuman Bhowmik and John Eastway, all archived and available by contacting [Senseo@delaware.com](mailto:Senseo@delaware.com). Still to come are Gregg Whitcraft from the UK Soundscape project (2 August), and discussions and demonstrations beamed in from The Big City's Enchanted Garden Festival (6-8). **+++**

Our very own rising roosters from the bleeding edge of experimental music, Ed Baskin and Phil England, host **London Underground** a weekly radio show on New York's WFMU 91.1 FM radio station during this summer. As well as spinning records and archive tapes, they'll be chatting to guests John Buzcher (1 August), Charles Hayward (8), Reg Hill (15), Steve Noble (22) and Evan Parker (29). The station is broadcast over the Internet from [www.broadcast.com/radioPublic/WFMU](http://www.broadcast.com/radioPublic/WFMU). **+++**

Sheffield multimedia organisation **Lovebytes** are calling for contributions to a CD-ROM *MakeMusic* they plan to release in early 2000. Anyone with appropriate digital music and/or music oriented interactive work should submit it to [info@320](mailto:info@320). The Workstation, 15 Paternoster Row, Sheffield S1 2BQ. Guidelines and further info can be found at [www.lovebytes.org.uk](http://www.lovebytes.org.uk). **+++** Former Glast '94 member **David Grubbs** has finally launched his long promised label **Blue Chopsticks**. The first two CD releases are by the French electroacoustic trio *Luc Fernand* and *Fourlings* 8, two reissued works from 1967 and 1970, and Grubbs's own improvising duo with Swedish saxophonist Mats Gustafsson. **Apparatus**

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# global ear

## Los Angeles

It has been famously said of Los Angeles that "there is no 'there' there". Viewed from the air, on the descent into LA International airport, it is easy to see why. In the distance gleam the towers of finance, and somewhere toward the hills lie the film studio lots. Together they comprise the centre of the global entertainment capital, in a rapidly decentralising world. In another direction the sprawling suburban grid of the San Fernando Valley laps like a dirty, glittering ocean against blasted hills. Somewhere below, scattered between North Hollywood and Arleta and Canoga Park, lives the core of the Plug Research community — Allen Awnessian (aka Mannequin Lung), Danny Zelonyk (Low Res, Crank), Dimitri Fergadis (Phthalocyanine) and John Tejada (Heavenly, Lucid Dream).

Physically spread out along LA's peripheries, this association of electronic artists creates experimental music so far outside the purview of the entertainment industry that it remains marginal even to LA Techno culture. Itself a faux-oppositional movement based on parties, drugs, promoters and money. The local Techno audiences haven't exactly embraced their new brand of "whoops and yibbles" (to borrow Thomas Pynchon's phrase). There had been talk that some of the Plug Research crew might play at O's, the Sunset Boulevard bar owned by actor Woody Harrison, where LA's

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month . . .

smogcock oxygenoscent strap on face masks and suck sweet, purified air at \$15 a pop. Alas, it's not to be — they have been banned from the joint since a jarring performance by Dimitri Fergadis left befuddled spectators spluttering through their nose tubes.

At least there's E3, the annual interactive media and gaming conference, where Danny Zelonyk's Low Res shares a bill with Meat Beat Manifesto. But when I arrive with Allen Awnessian, Zelonyk has already played to an underpopulated room. It's a far cry from Pynchon's vision, described in *The Crying Of Lot 49*, of live electronic music clubs with Stockhausen on tap proliferating throughout Southern California. In the here and now, LA is none too friendly to the likes of Plug Research.

"The label originated in LA, so in that respect we are an LA label," says Awnessian, "but in regards to artist roster or musical aesthetic we don't have any geographical predisposition or prejudice." In addition to its local roster, the label counts Sweden's Smoggyssana and Australia's TDS among its regulars, and has issued one-off releases by the likes of Mike Paradinas, Ken Ishi, Mark Broom and Ireland's Alan Fernandez.

"I don't know whether having lived in LA most of my life has influenced my approach to the label," Awnessian continues. "An outsider might be able to draw parallels with some earlier LA school, but this isn't something which enters into our thinking at all. It'd be untrue for me to tell you that there are a lot of people here who share the same kind of values that we consistently emphasise and adhere to." At the same time, LA's fractal quality — continually opening up into new neighbourhoods and subcultures previously invisible

to the outsider — isn't lost on him. The recent Shadow Hunterz release, a collaboration between Trash Aesthetic (Awnessian and Zelonyk) and a pair of young HipHop MCs, provided the opportunity to forge alliances outside of the small electronic music community. And while there is nothing particularly Los Angeles about the label's music, John Tejada's remix of Mannequin Lung's "City Lights", which sets Deine Djeto's New York homage within a motorik Detroit sound, suggests a nostalgia for traditional urban space. The diversity of the

music on Plug Research is less emblematic of anything-goes postmodernism than of a restless reaching out beyond generic conventions. If early releases tended toward glitch-hidden Techno, the recent output defies easy categorisation: *Voices In My Lunchbox Vol 1*, for example, features Pole, Smoggyssana and musicians from Vienna's Cheap and Mega labels attempting to

reconcile electronics and vocals.

But the record which embodies the label's philosophy is Low Res's *Approximate Low Res: Mistaken Alien Interpretations Of Earth Music*, which incorporates fractured synth jazz, tapeworm carnival themes, jackhammer percussion, scuffed groove Electro, cinematic Ambient overtones, and even the odd breakbeat or two. Whereas early releases by Mannequin Lung, Kim Rapsa, Trash Aesthetic and others had audible roots in experimental Techno, Zelonyk's latest work comes out of nowhere like a jumbled radio signal from a satellite splashing down in the middle of the ocean (a metaphor reinforced by the album's concept: alien muscologists have collected and re-assembled the whole history of Earthling music for archiving on the planet Lomax). *Low Res* incorporates elements of earlier Plug Research records and reconfigures them, plotting known points into unfamiliar patterns. Like LA, this decentered music careers off at all angles, building irrationally upon itself like an Escher staircase. Zelonyk reaches for a spatial metaphor to describe his music: "There are similar grid-like filters which develop in our minds and influence our mental/emotional/creative processes. To me it's slavery, and when I hear music which conforms to any kind of grid, I'm instantly bored. When something succeeds in completely violating the grid, and simultaneously suggests a superior organisational principle, I'm extremely happy."

"Of course, you could take a more positive attitude by saying that there are distorted grids, multiple overlapping grids, inverted grids, anti-grids," he concludes, "but usually the effect I'm talking about comes from an organisational principle that's not so easily quantified. Perhaps the principle itself mutates over the course of time and can't be pinned down other than as a snapshot of something in transition."

PHILIP SHERBURNE



Low Res (left) and Mannequin Lung live in LA. Above: Phthalocyanine



## Amy Denjo Greatest Hits

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"Recommended" - The Wire

## UnFolkUs

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Also available:  
Pineal Ventana: "Molpractice"  
Bethany Curve: "Skies A Crossed Sky" & "Gold"  
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Jupiter BB: Self Titled EP  
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### CD LR 270 EUGENE CHADBOURNE AND THE INSECT AND WESTERN PART BEAUTY AND THE BLOODSUCKERS

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### CD LR 272 PAGO LIBRE WAKE UP CALL

An international superstar group celebrating its 10th anniversary: John Wolf Brannan (Switzerland), Daniele Patumi (Italy), Tacho Theising (Austria), Arkady Shrikloper (Russia). The first CD in the history of the group recorded live in front of a hungry Sicilian crowd who would not let them go. Notes by Alex Kan, total duration over 65 minutes.



### CD LR 273 GLEN HALL HALLUCINATIONS: MUSIC AND WORDS FOR WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS

A collaborator of the late G.E. Evans, Glen Hall does not release many CDs, but his every CD is a jewel. "Hallucinations" is a sonic film; a movie made of sound, inspired by two novels by William S. Burroughs, *Nova Express* and *The Wild Boys*. There is no plot, only scenes, characters, moods, images. 13 musicians including Roswell Rudd take part in the project. Total duration 73 minutes.



### LEO LAB CD 059 JAMES FEI SOLO WORKS

The solo works by composer/instrumentalist James Fei each focuses on a set of formal and indeterminate processes, realized on bass clarinet, soprano, alto and bass saxophones. The often intensely chaotic material resides within clearly defined structures - a music which utilizes fully the possibilities for the composer/performer. Extensive notes by James Fei.



### LEO LAB CD 060 MISHA FEIGIN BOTH KINDS OF MUSIC; Dues with Elliot Sharp, Davey Williams, Ladonna Smith, Craig Hultgren, Eugene Chadbourne

Misha Feigin (no relation to the producer) is just about the only musician we know playing improvised/new music on belataika. He plays classical guitar as well while his above named partners play dobro, guitars, electric guitars, cello and violins. 7 compositions recorded at different locations, total duration 70 minutes.



### LEO LAB CD 061 CHAMAELEO VULGARIS OUVERTURE FACILE

Chamaeleo Vulgaris is a group founded in 1991 by Frederick Galley. The line-up of the group fluctuates between 1 and 12 musicians, depending on the circumstances. The local point of the group is to explore the full range of aesthetics between improvisation and written composition. Chamaeleo Vulgaris is not afraid of surprising and even shocking its followers. Total duration over 65 minutes.

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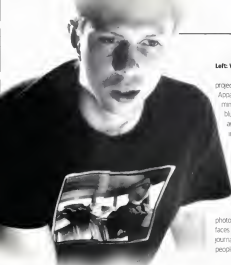
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Left: Worn Delever wears John Fahey's art on his T-shirt

projected a vision of a single America, uniting Appalachian breakdowns, Acadian one-steps, coal-mining ballads, Delta blues, Piedmont blues, Texas blues, half-remembered English and Irish shanties, and baptist spirituals. The collection's stylistic integration suggests the realisation of the American dream, despite all the facts to the contrary. Perhaps the best record to come out of the first wave of Americana was, almost inevitably, made by a group of Canadians (with a token ringer from Arkansas). With only two explicit references to an earlier time, The Band's self-titled second album, released in 1967, evoked an America straight out of a yellowed photograph complete with dirt roads, overalls, rugged faces and families carousing on front porches. As journalist Ed Ward wrote "The Band helped a lot of people dizzy from the confusion of the 60s feel that

of authenticity. Worn Delever is looking for something else when he draws his old-timey heartbreak ballads underneath cradle apophyses. *I Want You To Live 100 Years* is emblematic of the recent need to camouflage sincerity with pastiche and irony, hence the samples of an ancient record in which someone mimics the sounds of saw mills, chickens and dogs, a vocal delivery that is half tongue-in-cheek, half heartfelt, and oblique images such as "sowing my true love to my side". The most burning question for intelligent pop music in the past 20 years or so has been how do you approach gravity, achieve depth and wear your heart on your sleeve without becoming Elton John? Gussaying up your loveborn lyrics in the arcane imagery and vintage garb of Americana is a ready-made answer.

Imitating the nifty antiques of Americana isn't just an easy way out for a generation helter on recycling the mistakes of the past, however. It's also a way of recapturing the grit and the dirt and the unwashed hair that used to be the mark of the underground counterculture. Everyone's got body piercings underneath their skatewear these days, but back then, people were really strange and didn't have to wear corpse paint to prove it. Unlike Nick Cave or Will Oldham, however, Delever doesn't use the archetypes of American-primitive music as a vehicle to create a larger-than-life persona or even to explore the dark side.

The godfather of the Midwest school of expensive exploration with a whiff of dissonance is John Fahey, who was probably the first musician to dare to play in the hallowed confines of America's folk tradition.

# queer folk

Peter Shapiro takes to the dirt roads in search of authenticity in the **New Americana**

On his new solo album, *I Want You To Live 100 Years*, Worn Delever sings, "Sad songs and waltzes aren't selling this year". But you wouldn't guess it from the number of US groups currently appropriating the mournful ballads and loopy tempos of American roots music. Most visibly, there's the much lauded alternative Country sound of Freakwater and Son Volt, promoted by 'zines such as *No Depression*, and so beloved of the middle-aged music elites that it gets its own section in the high street megastores. Then there's the resurrection of John Fahey, the emergence of Will Oldham as a kind of demonic Pete Seeger, the renewed fascination with field recordings, not to mention the resissues of *The Anthology Of American Folk Music* and the collected recordings of Alan Lomax. The only thing that's missing is 'the new Dylan', or maybe 'the new Peter, Paul & Mary', to come along and catalyse the scene.

In the 1960s, the last time there was a significant interest in this kind of music, the search was on for a mythic community that lived up to the promises of the great American experiment. Harry Smith's *Anthology Of American Folk Music*, which was originally released in 1952, was the Rosetta Stone of the first American folk revival. The anthology impacted so heavily because it

the nation was big enough to include them, too". Paradoxically, The Band did this by evoking the ghosts of the Civil War dead. And the mythic appeal of Americana was so great that they could sing about a Confederate soldier being moved to tears by seeing Robert E. Lee, and get away with it.

This time around, the interest in American roots music derives from a similar lack, but it's not an absence of community that artists such as Will Oldham and Two Dollar Guitar are responding to. Instead, they're trying to fill the holes in their souls. At the risk of sounding like Jean Baudrillard, the rediscovery of roots is a search for authenticity in the age of the simulacrum. The *No Depression* sound looks to pre-countytopolitan Country as a model of melody and craftsmanship in an age of Hip-hop noise, as a refuge where you can sing about being fucked up without it being a fashion statement. But however much they might want to recapture eternal verities, they always confuse that horrible, end-of-millennium, Yankee whine, where every statement is phrased as if it was a question, with the nasal mannerisms of old Appalachia, and remind us that no one can escape their own time.

But there's something more going on here than a bunch of charlatans wrapping themselves in the cloak

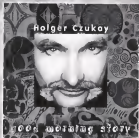
Fahey's influence is most obviously felt on Pullman's 1998 album *Tunesleys & Jinxes*, a very polite acoustic jamboree that borders precariously on Michael Hedges/Alex DeGrassi territory.

Working similar terrain but located a few hundred miles away, Two Dollar Guitar, led by guitarist Tim Foljahn, add the ghostly panoramas of drawn-out slide guitar runs and blue note slurs to the bass heavy meanderings of the Tortoise school of instrumental timidity. Crucially, however, Foljahn's notion of roots encompasses both the rolling drums of The Velvet Underground's "The Ocean" and The Music Machine's Farfisa organ swell, as well as banjo playing hayseeds and hard-living shortcorps. In spite of its mock field recording sleeve notes, their 1998 *Tran Songs* album is also more cinematic than most New Americana. Foljahn has been to Ry Cooder's Paris, Texas once or twice. As La Lengua Asesna, Foljahn not only covers Townes Van Zandt's bloody "Waiting Around To Die", he also excavates Elizabethan courtly madrigals like an alternative Ritchie Blackmore. Although there's an attitude towards the source material that's certainly not reverent, but not exactly disrespectful either, there is still a grating question with all New Americana: just how is it any different from Hot Tuna?

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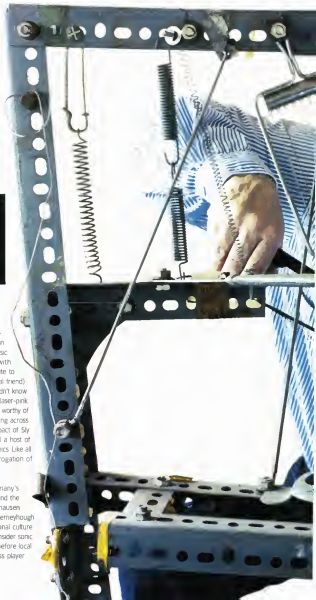
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With electronics, ingenuity and muscle, drummer **Tony Oxley** continues to defy time's restrictive Gavin Bryars, and the recent reissues of two lost free jazz classics, Ben Watson travels to Germany

# exiled

Once witnessed, the elemental power of Tony Oxley's drum music is not easily erased from memory. Although a seasoned ally of guitarist Derek Bailey — eight years younger, Oxley was also born and bred in Sheffield and started out in nightclub work — his music is less perverse, more determinate. In 1987, Oxley toured with saxophonist Gerd Dudek, performing the 'Elvin Jones' role in a tribute to the classic quartet of John Coltrane (Jones, incidentally, is a personal friend). When Oxley's solo erupted at the Leeds Trades Club the audience didn't know what had hit it: tunnels of grinding, grating industrial noise strated by laser-pink snaps and pops, movie style cuts and wipes, monumental abstraction worthy of Edgar Varèse, yet played with just four limbs, veils of sound moving across each other in real time. Stockhausen delivered with the visceral impact of *Six Durbars*. That one solo — really a 12 minute piece — reconfigured a host of assumptions about distinctions between jazz and classical and electronics. Like all music that hits straight between the ears, it demanded an interrogation of received wisdoms, an enquiry into musical history.

Oxley now lives in Viersen near Düsseldorf, drawn by Germany's regional support for 20th century sounds, the gig possibilities and the grant money (the night I was there, the city was staging a Stockhausen concert featuring Zyklus). As with radical British composers Brian Ferneyhough and Richard Barrett, exile seems a logical response to a tepid national culture hypnotised by crossover ambition and pop celebrity, reluctant to consider sonic experience as an end in itself. However, the free music developed before local audiences in Sheffield during the mid-60s by Oxley, Bailey and bass player



philosophy, but also a committed jazz bass player with a haircut modified on Scott La Faro's — joined soon after. To supplement commercial toil, the musicians began organising Saturday lunchtime gigs at a city centre pub called The Groves. They built a committed word-of-mouth audience, many of them from the nearby Sheffield University. They played 'jazz', but they wanted something of their own, something that wouldn't condemn them to secondary, sub-American status. Freedom and progress were the buzzwords. A recording of "Miles' Mode" (soon to be released on CD-ROM by the Inland label) shows Holbrooke transforming the famous Coltrane vehicle by inserting bars of silence, injecting a chili drama into the rush of the tune.

This is how Andrew Shone — doorkeeper at The Groves, and the organiser of the trio's tour with almost Lee Konitz in 1966 — describes the music: "Gavin would jump up and down the bass like La Faro, come up from the E string and rocket to the bridge and then descend in these clusters and carve something out in the middle — and meanwhile Derek would be playing very, very quiet complicated chords behind, and then he'd suddenly punctuate something and the whole room would shake like someone had let a cannon off, metallic adrenalin. I was always surprised to see such a quiet, good humoured, good natured man as Derek sitting there crouched over his Gibson hardly moving and these incredible sounds would come out, quite arhythmic and very accented."

Contrary to the myth of free improvisation as a random racket, the sheer drama of the playing — variously described by addicts as 'tension', 'pin-drop silence' or 'nowness' — actually depends upon a developed sense of time. For this Oxley's contribution was crucial. He describes it with no-nonsense Yorkshire bluntness: his is a manifesto for those unpersuaded by explanations of musical creativity that rely on the transcendental virtues of drugs (or God).

"There's no use in me working on a concept of time and thinking I'm on my own here, that I've got to find the answers in my own soul or what have you. Elvin Jones comes along [the claps his hands]. That's it! This is not to copy him, this is his concept and how to build on it."

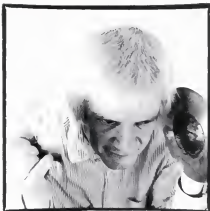
Oxley's 1B-quevers-to-a-bar schema has been printed in a magazine (Crescendo, 1965). "A base of crocheted triplets instead of quarter notes in their original value, thus piling it up in three levels." It was a deliberate extension of Elvin Jones's approach in Coltrane's quartet. "When I heard Elvin Jones, I was working on this concept of six as a base instead of four, but in four, which gives you a kind of 'mathematical contradiction' of 1B quevers to the bar, when it should only be eight — and when you turn it into triplets, it's 12. If you turn the four into crocheted triplets, you automatically come from four to six, and if there is a triplet on each one of those crocheted triplets — I know it sounds a bit academic, but it's the only way to explain it — then you've got 18. Now when I heard Elvin Jones, he was halfway there! But he wasn't going to that point. We talked twice, and I know I was not his intention to move it to that next level, but it was my intention to move it to that next level. I'm working from the basic, very bottom of normal jazz language. Then Elvin comes along and I find he is halfway along the same street as me. It's saving me a lot of bloody time!"

The great divide for 50s jazz fans was between West Coast jazz — supposedly white, effete and aloof — and hard bop — supposedly black, vital and intense. Between 1960 and 1962, Oxley led a quartet that emulated Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, the quintessential hard bop unit. He demurs from Derek Bailey's opinion

that, in comparison to bebop, hard bop "edged downmarket aesthetically." Oxley concedes that if you were to compare hard bop with Bill Evans, "strength or aggression might seem to cloud and eliminate certain subtleties." It's strong music. Regardless, Oxley's appreciation of hard bop power was undoubtedly an important contribution to Joseph Holbrooke, whose music was poised to supersede the 'bodymind' (or 'blackwhite') binary.

Although it has taken decades for the dust to settle, it is increasingly evident that The Joseph Holbrooke Trio were part of a special moment in the evolution of European music. Like pianist Krzysztof Komeda in Poznan, who later scored Roman

Polanski's films, and the Jamaican alto saxophonist Joe Harriott in London, Holbrooke were working at the very edge of post-bop, using improvisation to make advanced music vivid and emotionally compelling. American jazz ideology — an uneasy alliance between Yankee chauvinism and black nationalism — holds that Europeans have contributed nothing innovative to the music. Derek Bailey is inclined to agree, though he does it by drawing a clear line between free improvisation and jazz. Because of the paucity of recordings, Joseph Holbrooke cannot constitute hard evidence, but music as crystal clear as *Boposed Traveller* and *4 Compositions For Sextet* does not arrive from nowhere, least of all from the experimental ad hoc encounters of improvising lore. The unsloganeering, in-your-face power of the albums — they pack the whoosh of classics like *Giant Steps* or *Out To Lunch* — indicates a fully fledged aesthetic.



Others were also looking to supersede the antinomy between Bill Evans and John Coltrane. Bristol-born saxophonist Evan Parker was brewing up something similar in Birmingham. His saxophone fitted perfectly into Oxley's music: gruff, flint-hard, super expressive. Bailey says that in John Stevens' Spontaneous Music Ensemble, Kenny Wheeler was like a brilliant jazzier facing an "untethered rhythm section." There were no such problems with Oxley. Wheeler's fleet lines sound fantastic. Despite this, Wheeler kept to the jazz side of the fence. He did not join the Musicians Co-op, a pack of musicians — Bailey, Oxley, Parker, pop bassist Barry Guy and trombonist Paul Rutherford — who banded together in the 70s to promote gigs and fight for this new music.

*4 Compositions* featured Oxley on acoustic kit. With characteristic shrewdness, he did not want to reveal his electronic innovations before mastering them technically. Intrigued by Bailey's use of electronics — using foot pedals to pan his sound in stereo and a volume pedal so that he could bring up a note gradually — Oxley had an engineer construct electronic devices so that his percussion sounds could be sustained and pitch-shifted.

"When you sat in front of Derek doing a solo concert on those days, I found his work with stereo and his volume pedal very interesting," Oxley recalls. "That to me seemed so musical as an idea for percussion, to have a volume control available on cymbals, to amplify that and make a volume change. The language Derek was using at that time was quite spectacular in terms of guitar. It gave you ideas. You get a licence from each other. You feel you're part of a movement. I used to have my stuff made for me specially. I didn't go in a shop and buy it. I think it wouldn't have functioned with percussion. When you've got a contact mic on a metal frame and you've got a cymbal pinned to this frame, or an egg slicer or whatever, that is like hitting the face of the microphone. The attack on the system of electronics that were

## “East Germany? Big busts of Marx all over, and it's about as close to Marx as fucking Thatcherism.”

available at that time — you had only a fuzzbox or a distortion pedal — was quite severe. I don't think it would have took what I was wanting to put through. I needed to define what I required to this man in Liverpool. He designed a box — plug in, plug out — with some focal elements that I could operate quickly and efficiently, so I could improvise."

Drums are traditionally the loudest instrument, the traditional function of amplification is to boost the bass. Didn't the new equipment create problems of balance?

"It wasn't for sheer volume, but to amplify quiet acoustic sounds," he explains. "If you get an egg slicer or a cheese grater and you pluck it, it'll have its own accidental characteristics which could be quite interesting. But the audience wouldn't hear it, just a tinkle tinkle in the background. To amplify it to a level where it would be useful doesn't mean taking it above the acoustic drum level. My idea was to work the two things together, the acoustic percussion and the electronics. It should have required a few more arms, but you can overcome these things, these are technical problems you have to deal with. The thing was: what couldn't it do? It couldn't sustain unless you were rolling, either on a cymbal or a drum. It didn't have pitch which could change, unless you pressed on the skin; if you hit it and press, it will have a sustain effect. You'd got metal rims that were relatively quiet, not able to be lifted to the level of the drum sound. So I got a metal pot — to bring more volume to the metallic side. I amplified some parts of the kit, but most of what I mixed was on a metal frame, so I'd have one hand on the frame and one hand on the acoustic drums, and be mixing the two together — though I really thought of it as extending the drum kit to be able to do things it couldn't do before. I'd almost tried to do everything possible with it as it was. I

needed to sustain and change pitch, and I needed volume in and out that wasn't achieved by hitting it harder and softer, rolling harder and softer and going on to fortissimo. You needed it in a switch — like, whomp!"

Osley's interest in shaping musical events goes back a long way. At age eight, he was fascinated by a piano that appeared in the family home. He began teaching himself to play. A shadow passes over his face as he reports its mysterious, Ker-Like 'disappearance'. A pre-rock 'n' roll adolescence — Osley was born in 1939 — meant that big bands and dancing were formative experiences. He recalls, "The resident big band in the local dance hall would play these things — 'The Hawk Talks', 'Intermission Riff', Woody Herman's 'Apple Honey' — from the American big bands. When it came to the drum solo, they'd put up Louis Bellson's 'Skin Deep'. We'd dance to it — 'be-bopping', we used to call it. Over the shoulders, under the legs, live — I don't know what your word is — really athletic stuff, and a lot of improvising. There were famous dancers that used to come to our local dance hall. Normal people going to the big bands could follow exactly what was going on with the sections. They'd be waiting for certain parts which would always be there — a certain trumpet section in 'Intermission Riff', for instance, where there's waterfall dissonances. To get involved on a personal level with improvised dancing, it meant a certain commitment. The following was so strong. When rock 'n' roll first showed its head, I really thought this can't replace it."

Drums soon became Osley's instrument. He continues, "I played in pubs when I was 15, big bands when I was 16, the usual repertoire: Basie, Ellington, Kenton, Woody Herman. Jazz was sort of normal." This was a brief spell of freedom between school and National Service at age 18. Osley decided to move from the relatively light work of an engineering apprenticeship ('milling, shaping, grinding') to heavy labour in the rolling mills: £7 a week, rather than £1 13s 6d, meant that purchasing a drum kit became a possibility.

Between 1957 and 1960, Osley was a conscript in the Black Watch regiment, but like many black musicians mobilised by the US government against the new, post-war 'menace' of communism, he turned the experience to an advantage; it was an opportunity to learn the formal structures of Western music. "Fortunately, there was a pipe and drum band in the Black Watch as well, so they did most of the ceremonial music: the military music and the parades," he explains. "I got a place in the regiment's classical orchestra, playing Beethoven, Mozart, Handel, Dvorak and Prokofiev."

The orchestra toured America playing concerts for the general public. Percussionists have long lay-offs in classical and Romantic symphonies. Osley declined to count the rests, instead cueing himself in by following the general shape of the compositions. He was starting to ponder extended musical structure.

"I was playing percussion: timpani, xylophone, glockenspiel, triangle if necessary, whatever needed to be played in the piece. With the classical composers, it's mostly timpani, but with other later composers, a bit more diverse, you've got to move around a bit. Having studied, or experienced, classical music in its structures and production, the diatonic system and the sonata form became a second language."

In the early 60s, Osley worked his way over to America on the Queen Mary, playing drums as a 'deej' in the gigantic liner's various orchestras. "We'd do the first class and then the cabin class and then the tourist class, while each went on holiday. I spent 48 hours in New York. I heard incredible musicians there in the jazz clubs."

Incredible music has rarely been the stock in trade of vested interests. Disturbed by Baptised Traveler — which at least had some semblance of a groove — Columbia's jazz department was shocked by 4 Compositions. The music's extreme dynamics (Osley's 'whoomf!') block casual listening. The label did not take up the third album option in Osley's contract. Bonnie Scott's partner Pete King put him in touch with RCA, for whom he recorded *Akhvius* in 1971. It is still, criminally, deleted. The cover sported a photograph of Osley's 'extended' kit, with its notorious cine reel and inverted aluminum saucopon. "Oryane (Percussion Solo)" had the diatonic, abstract quip of percussion pieces by Varèse or Cage, an 'electronic' futurism lacking in many electrically generated musics which reproduce a monima heartbeat pulse. Sound is stripped raw and presented as an absolutist montage. It is the antithesis of

Osley live in the mid-80s



codes. Following the return of Joseph Holbrooke, his epochal 60s trio with Derek Bailey and to interview Oxley about 40 years of radical music practice. Photography: Philip Lethen



# in time

Gavin Bryars in The Joseph Holbrooke Trio is now a global phenomenon: a permanent noise fest that laughs in the face of classical and commercial canons. After a 32 year lay off, Joseph Holbrooke — named after a forgotten Cockney composer whose compositions they never played (a sample of Gavin Bryars's subversive pataphysics) — has now reconvened for gigs and recordings. It has taken so long because in the 70s Bryars rejected improvisation in favour of composition. Since establishing himself as a composer, he is no longer averse to dusting down his bass. The first attempt to reunite the trio, for a performance in a Santa Monica art gallery in 1995, fell through due to illness. Finally, in September 1998 they played a concert in Cologne, then in December, the Malibu-based Organ Of Corti label took Holbrooke into a London studio where they recorded a double CD which is due for release later this year. Time is folded like one of Oxley's beat montages.

Interest in Tony Oxley has also burgeoned following Sony's recent reissues of his albums *Baptised Traveller* and *4 Compositions For Sextet*, recorded for Columbia in 1969 and 1970. For three decades, the vinyl originals have been the holy grail for avant scavengers. Once heard, it's clear why — they document the emergence of free improvisation from its jazz chrysalis, and pack an overwhelming punch. Far from the 'anything goes' confusion dreaded by jazz conservatives, this musical revolution sounds icily deliberate. Their reappearance calls for a reappraisal of a period when many thought anything could happen in music. Did a major label's interest in such radicalism seem natural?

"It was interesting that Columbia would allow someone like me to make those records," Oxley says. "Drummers aren't really known for their musical compositions, or



enthusiasm to move in that direction. The thing I thought was important was that the drums shouldn't be playing all the time. Why? Where did this idea come from? Even in jazz, when I first came down to London, I'd stop playing in bass solos. It seemed to me it wasn't necessary. When I was in the army, I was playing classical music. In 19th century classical music, the drums were there for the weight. You very rarely played unless the rest of the orchestra was playing. It was to give body."

This from a drummer who was once acclaimed as one of the world's best timekeepers. House drummer at London's Ronnie Scott's from 1966 to the early 70s, Oxley has played for saxophonists Johnny Griffin, Sonny Rollins, Stan Getz and Joe Henderson, pianist Bill Evans wanted him for his trio, Cecil Taylor, Anthony Braxton and Paul Bley have all used him on their trio recordings. And all the while his timekeeping was in such heavy demand elsewhere, he kept up with his own music, where mere skill-spotting is balked by a madly creative agenda.

It is interesting to speculate why Oxley's music has been such a well guarded secret, hard for even improv hounds to sniff out. Perhaps it's because power has become such a maligned quality in art. Since the failure of the social transformations heralded by modern art in the 1920s, aesthetic confusion has been ubiquitous. To break with the general fuzziness about objectives, to declare that art is more than just scene-making and networking, is considered ungentlemanly, an assault on bourgeois values even. Coupled with a dry northern sense of humour — and devoid of Bley's wiles — Oxley's bluntness was bound to land him in trouble. It did. His exchanges with jazz critics — horrified at this 'abstract' new music — were notorious.

The old myths die hard. As recently as last year Oxley had to suffer sleeve-note caveats like, "In the late 60s, Oxley played with untamed force and drama, if little subtlety" (from the booklet to Paul Bley's *Chaos on Soul Note*). This is as inappropriate as regretting the absence of subtle brushwork in a late Mondrian painting. Actually, Oxley's early 70s avoidance of overt pulse is subtle beyond belief. Failure to credit modern art procedures (the 'jazz syndrome') results in putdowns like "Oxley, one of the-best-is-everywhere-and-nowhere school" (from John Szwed's notes to Bley's *Jazz*). An art critic who dissed Jackson Pollock for being "unable to draw" would be dismissed as a simpleton, but without the kind of protective forcefield provided by art galleries and music publishers, such insults are regularly heaped on our free improvisors. Oxley has learned to laugh off the brickbats.

Contrary to these slurs, which doubtless stem from preference for the 'sweet' and of Bley's wide-ranging output, Oxley's drumming is a precision tool, a calculated method of heightening interaction between improvisors. Unlike many of his generation, he has not been seduced by either art space neo-classicism or the festival-grabbing trappings of pastiche and entertainment. His drumming is a passionate vortex, drawing the most unlikely sound sources into its wake, whirling everything into a strangely calm and brave soundscape. One of Oxley's quartets includes Hugh Metcalfe — a wild, ineffectually riling guitarist whose exploits with sound poet Bob Cobbing in *Bradyak* are Walpurgisnachts of epeler, splatter and hilarity — and Philipp Wachsmann, a classically trained violinist who discourses on the possibility of rigorous 12-tone improvisation. Oxley's rhythmic openness can make expansive dialogue out of such seemingly incompatible forces. It should do, because that is what it was designed for.

His most recent work was a suite for Bill Dixon, the free jazz trumpeter and comrade-in-arms of Archie Shepp and Cecil Taylor. His Celebration Orchestra included the live electronics wizard Pat Thomas, out 'n' paste surrealist Matt Wand (from Stock,hausen & Walker) and singer Phil Minton. The latter's contributions to the resulting album, *The Enchanted Messenger* (Soul Note), have to be heard to be believed. Minton's wheezing evocations of male hysteria, alcoholic abjection and horrendous catarrh find an unending sequence of pockets and lugholes in the orchestral onslaught. A drummer that can weld such opposites is not about to weld brushes for cocktail parties.

Well, to return to the beginning of all this modern art nuisance, what precisely did The Joseph Holbrooke Trio play? In September 1963 — having planned to relocate to London — Derek Bailey was tempted back north for cabaret work in Chesterfield by what he describes as a 'promising' situation: a group that seemed to want to really play, to improve themselves. Gavin Bryars — then a student of

the flock wallpaper, nightclub kitsch accoutrements of jazz

Was there any other place to go? A classical scene ruled by Benjamin Britten and Richard Rodney Bennett was hardly likely to embrace an ex-steelworker's improvisations as high art. In response to his unpromising situation, Bailey, Oxley and Parker founded Incus Records, the pioneering independent label whose avant-garde intransigence has set the agenda for so much musical activity today.

In the early '70s, the painter Alan Dave — once courted alongside Jackson Pollock by Peggy Guggenheim for his abstract expressionist canvases, now painting anthropo-syncretic magic realism — asked Oxley to play at a show at Gimpel Fils, the London art dealers. A friendship started, with the pair playing experimental improvisations at Dave's studio in Cornwall. Dave's cover for one of Oxley's Incus releases made it a collector's item. Dave gave Oxley a violin, which he played on *February Papers* for Incus in 1977. Oxley also began painting his own abstracts, which are — if anything — fresher than Dave's canvases, revealing a keen eye for spatial surprise and an improviser's cartoon humour and suggestiveness. Like Oxley's music, the designs follow threads of thought into unlikely traps and quagmires, a zippy sense of the sexual is spiced with fascination for machines and unlikely objects. White pigment can float over the surface like a glassy reflection, unexpected levels of arrangement, like electronic sustain on a shimmering cymbal.

Another avant-garde collaborator has been pianist Cecil Taylor. Unlike Oxley, Taylor is a major figure in official jazz — the pianist was offered Wynton Marsalis's position at New York's Lincoln Center, but refused it because of its reactionary implications. In 1968 Taylor visited Berlin and played a week of concerts with the cream of Europe's free improvisors (Bailey included). The Berlin free music label FMP issued a ten CD set to commemorate the series. Taylor concluded the series with a devastating duet with Oxley, his accompanist of choice for four years. The week was a wilful return to the principles of the 60s musical revolution by one of America's most fitted jazz artists. It is hard to imagine what the politically driven legislators of American jazz can conclude from these events — that the revolution will be international, beyond colour and nation and the Lincoln Center, experimental, unpredictable and glorious, perhaps?

Oxley's face lights up when talk turns to Cecil Taylor. "Working with Cecil, I can sum it up in a three letter word — joy, absolute joy. He works his arse off!" When accompanying Taylor's masterstrokes, there is no danger that Oxley will be criticised for extremism — Taylor's piano is already as extreme as today's music can get. What is surprising is the immediate understanding between the two musicians: the way each pause and torrent and explosion feels like a wilful embrace.

"I think where Cecil was so important is that the 60s jazz revolution was not just harmonic, in form and structure, it was rhythmic as well," says Oxley. "I never felt that playing time behind Cecil would be appropriate. If you are not sure about the rhythmic conception or content or possibilities or freedoms of his playing, you're going to find it very tough. You can't find your way purely on a level of intuition. You have to know a bit more than that — you have to know enough so that Cecil doesn't have to point out anything to you, or you wouldn't be up there. Either he wouldn't invite you or you wouldn't have the nerve to do it. You need to have a little understanding of his music."

Talking with Oxley exposes a rich seam of facts and opinions, as gritty as they are illuminating. About recording John McLaughlin's 1969 album *Extrapolation*, hailed as a landmark of early British avant-garde jazz, he says bluntly: "It was a pop record, a job. I was broke." About the 1980 gig with cellist George Born and Lindsay Cooper



Oxley's array, clockwise from top left: Derek Bailey, Cecil Taylor, Alan Dave, Gavin Bryars



denounced by Val Wilmer as evincing male oppression, he pleads innocent. About his sojourn in pre-fall East Germany, he spies, "Big busts of Marx all over, and it's about as close to Marx as fucking Thatcherism!" He plays me a mighty dub mix of an acoustic drum solo produced at Vangelis's studio in 1977, then goes on to recall a few memorable events, such as the concert for Lord Byron with a Scottish pipe band and bouzouki players, and the "industrial" event with tapes of Ruhr Valley steelworks.

Given Oxley's no-nonsense approach, what did he think about John Cage, credited as the alternate current — distinct from jazz — that helped sparked free improvisation?

"I can't remember when I first heard Cage, but it was definitely when Gavin Bryars was there," he answers. "I thought it was absolutely fascinating, but not necessarily for me. It was obviously very 'classical', which meant that the improvisatory quality was not strong enough for me, though I felt — quite honestly — that it could be improved. But it didn't stop the respect for what he produced, particularly the prepared piano pieces. Whilst I could understand certain classical piano players thinking it was sacrilege, I thought the sounds were interesting."

"Subsequently, we attended Cage's lectures in London, and I read *Silence*. I found it really interesting. He was quite a rebel. It's a philosophy, isn't it, like Marcel Duchamp, these philosophers using a musical language or a visual arts language? For me, you quickly realise that," he concludes. "You don't expect to find a stamp so clear like you would with Brecht."

#### Some records

**Tony Oxley** *Exposed Traveller* (1969, Columbia 49443B), *4 Compositions For Sextet* (1970, Columbia 494437), *Incus* (1971, RCA/Victor SF8215), *Tony Oxley* (1975, Incus LP8), *February Papers* (1977, Incus LP18), *The Gilder And The Grinder* (1987, Broad LP25), *Enchanted Messenger* (1996, Soul Note 121284).

**Cecil Taylor/William Parker/Tony Oxley** *Celebrated Bizarro/The Fool Trio* (1990, FMP CD5B).

**Tony Oxley & Derek Bailey** *Soho Sures* (1997, Incus CD29/3D).

**Undercurrents #8** a series of articles uncovering the hidden wiring of 20th century music. This sound art, linking the post-human, post-musical automata of now with the mechanical instruments

# humans, are they really

*"The men of the Middle Ages were so mechanically minded they could believe that angels were in charge of the mechanisms of the universe. A 14th century Provençal manuscript depicts two winged angels operating the revolving machine of the sky"*  
Jean Gimpel, *The Medieval Machine*

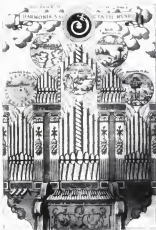
In 1650, the Renaissance Jesuit polymath Athanasius Kircher published 1500 copies of a treatise on music and acoustics called *Musurgia Universalis*. Taking over the role of the angels, Kircher had invented an eccentric collection of mechanical devices that generated, amplified and ordered sound. Floating in a Renaissance netherworld of science and mysticism that seems relevant once again, thanks to the TechnoGnostic theories of Erik Davis, Kircher's designs for sound machines included solar powered singing statues, Aeolian harps powered by the wind, a hydraulic organ that seemed to sound through automata representing Pan and Echo, and spiral tubes that projected sound out of the mouths of statues or eavesdropped on conversations in adjacent rooms. He also built an elementary computer, described by Jocelyn Godwin, researcher in esoteric sound, as "a 'musical arithmetic' ark" or box of sliders on which the patterns are written, that serves as a composing machine."

The vernacularism of speaking statues and articulated masks, used by the priesthood to conjure spirit voices on demand, was a formative stage in the history of automata. In their turn, automata were the forerunners of robots, replicants and recording. In 18th century Japan, where an optimistic belief in the robotic future of classic *so-ji* still survives, Dutchmen were entertained by *karakuri* performances staged by live musicians and mechanical dolls. An illustration from a guide to Osaka published in 1798 shows the Takeda theatre, where a Kabuki style percussion ensemble accompanied a mechanical corderel banging a large drum.

These mechanical inventions played an important role in technological evolution. "Just as the European automata of men like Vaucanson anticipated the machines of the Industrial Revolution," wrote Mary Hiller in *Automata & Mechanical Toys*, "the Japanese performance of *karakuri* was an awakening of automation." According to Hiller, this example of human-machine interfacing led to improvements in the making of medicines and sugar with the use of

treadmill machines.

Similarly, the development of Virtual Reality has been traced to another mechanical musical instrument, the player-piano. In *Virtual Worlds*, Benjamin Wadley's exploration of VR simulation, a genealogy is mapped notions of computer simulated reality, formulated in the late 1960s by computer graphics pioneer Ivan Sutherland, were inspired by the Link Trainer flight simulator. In turn, the source of inspiration for the Link Trainer was the Pandia. Having been born into a family



business of mechanical musical instruments, Edwin Link used the pneumatic mechanism of player-pianos as a basis for his invention of the first flight trainer in 1930.

A technology that allowed music to be perfectly and repeatedly reproduced until the mechanism broke, mechanical music also anticipated the phonograph. Extraordinary creations such as Alexandre Theroud's violin-playing monkey, designed in 1862, became refined and miniaturised for public consumption. A break luxury trade in musical boxes, clocks adorned with mechanical singing birds, even musical pictures

enhanced by chiming bells, only declined with World War One as other forms of recorded sound became more widely available. This evolutionary obsolescence inevitably becomes a sign of mutated history when the work of composers and performers who create with machines, whether Conlon Nancarrow's or James Tenney's compositions for player-pianos, Stockhausen's *Zolox*, piece for music boxes, or the post-John Cage, post-Grandmaster Flash turntablism of Philip Jeck, Project Dark, Christian Marclay or DJ Disk.

Life-sized musical automata of the 19th century were shrouded in an air of exoticism, occultism and horror that matched contemporary fictional obsessions of Edgar Allan Poe and HP Lovecraft, or the profoundly influential modern creation myth of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Films as diverse as *Dead of Night*, *Blade Runner*, *Toy Story* and *Brave of Chucky* have explored the ambiguously disturbing yet comic implications of toys coming to life, existing on the threshold of consciousness, taking revenge on their lords and masters.

Rooted in magic, machines that can play music independently of humans also invoke the most modern of fears. Like HAL in 2001: A Space Odyssey, they ask a chilling question: "If humans, are they really necessary?" Futurist theorist, poet and activist Filippo Marinetti posed a similar threat in an essay called "Multiplied Man And The Reign Of The Machine." "We look for the creation of a nonhuman type," he wrote, "in whom moral suffering, goodness of heart, affection and love, those sole corrosive poisons of inextinguishable vital energy, sole interruptors of our powerful bodily electricity will be abolished. This nonhuman and mechanical being, constructed for an omnipresent velocity, will be naturally cruel, omniscient and combative."

Full up with modern vigour and primitive energy, Marinetti encouraged Luigi Russolo to give performance of his intonarumori noise machines in Modena, Milan, Genoa, Paris, Prague and London "I have the impression of having introduced cows and bulls to their first locomotive," wrote Marinetti, contemptuous of the public derision that Russolo's Art of Noise faced. Inspired by the noises of the world, natural, industrial and martial, Russolo bubbled with infectious enthusiasm about the possibilities of the new century. "The lyrical and artistic constitution of the chaos of noise in life," he wrote, "constitutes our new acoustical pleasure, capable of truly stirring our

month, David Toop traces the history of  
and devices of the Renaissance

# necessary?

nerves, of deeply moving our soul, and of multiplying a hundred-fold the rhythm of our life."

The supposed barbarism of Russolo's machines was overshadowed in 1914 by the barbarity of total war. A tour was cancelled, the noise instruments were lost and Russolo enlisted in the Italian army, in his words "lucky enough to fight in the midst of the marvelous and grand and tragic symphony of modern war." Wounded in battle, he was discharged from the army and resumed his public displays of noise in 1921. By 1928, there were hopes that his Noise Harmonium might go into production as the perfect accompaniment for silent movies. Then the talkies took over and all of Russolo's potential financial backers faded away, for the second time. Russolo was a victim of the progress he celebrated. Now ghosts at the millennial feast, the intonarumori stand mute, an intangible beginning for the 20th century's fascination with noise, industry and the operations of nonhuman mechanical beings.

*"He liked the happy-looking row of electrical meters and the fact that they bled off in 3/2 time, clove time, that the multiple row of pipes with their valves whistled, water whirling through them. He liked the crunching noises when faucets were turned on, the conga-drum pounding of the washroom dryer, the thunder of the coal-bin walls" — Oscar Hijuelos, The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love*

Russolo's machines were created in a climate of political upheaval and scientific discovery. "This branch of physics has received renewed attention from research workers during the past decade," wrote EG Richardson in the 1927 preface to *Sound: A Physical*

*Text Book*, "stimulated no doubt in part by the European War and by the development of broadcasting." Musical instruments such as the piano — embodiments of the aesthetic values of European art music — were beginning to be challenged by the electrical world of the radio, the phonograph or the Theremin. Erik Satie, equally inspired by the noise of typewriters and the sound of jazz groups, was one of the earliest composers to become alert to these changes and reflect them in music.

EG Richardson's textbook updated the work of late 19th century physicists such as Hermann Helmholtz and John Tyndall and predecessors such as Chladni, scientists whose researches have been echoed in the music of Edgard Varèse, Harry Partch and Alvin Lucier. Tyndall, for example, summarised many experiments in *Sound*, first published in 1898, bowing long

PHOTO: DEAN BECHER

Above: Max Eastley's *Bombom Circuit*.

Left: Athanasius Kircher, *The Mermany Of The World's Creation* (1650)



impulse to the growth and evolution of music," he wrote, "is generated by the human ear, not by the piano keyboard, without which the harmony classes of this day and age would be inoperative. And the missing element which the human ear wants and needs most is a musical instrument capable of expressing an infinite range of ideas and of infinite mutability, so that ideas can first be tested, then proved or corrected."

Partch's instruments — remarkable constructions that were designed to play a 43 tone scale and dominate the staging of his integrated theatre works — are as striking in their look and their materials as any sculpture or furniture design of the mid-century. Partch also questioned the formality of concert venues, suggesting that a bar might be a better place to enjoy music. Sound sculptures and audio installations challenged many of the precepts of 20th century concert-going by working towards a deconstruction of the triangulated relationship of composer, performer and audience.

The sculptures of François and Bernard Bachelot from France were artefacts of the space age, all silvered surfaces, steel flowers and translucent manta ray wing forms, yet they signalled a reaction against the omniscient control wielded by composers of electronic

music. Like many sound sculptures, the Bachelot brothers' constructions were acoustic, and they could be sounded by visitors to their exhibitions. What was implied (later to be demanded in the anti-elitist spirit of the late 1960s and early 1970s, a period of stage invasions, jam sessions and free festivals) was a democratisation of music making. Ironically, this easy accessibility has consigned the Bachelot instruments to near-oblivion, their eerie, resonant tones suggested a kind of freedom, yet sullied from the same intractability that Varese had crossed in Russolo's intonarumori.

The paradox of freedom created by machines was explored in isolation by Percy Grainger, one of the least classifiable, confoundingly contradictory composers of the 20th century. In 1924, a year in which his arrangement of "Country Gardens" had sold 27,000 copies in the US and Canada alone, Grainger gave a series of lecture-recitals in Australia that broached the subject of machines that could play "featureless music." It seems to me absurd," he wrote in a 1938 essay called "Free Music," "to live in an age of flying and yet not be able to execute tonal glides and curves. Machines (if properly constructed and properly written for) are capable of niceties of emotional expression impossible to a human performer."

Ten years later, Grainger built his first Free Music Machine. He had been producing piano rolls since 1915 and the machines he constructed in later life were Heath Robinson extensions of the player-piano, mixing milk bottles, bamboo, ping-pong balls, children's toy records, brown paper and string with harmonium reeds, oscillators and a vacuum cleaner. Given names such as "The Cross-Grainger Double-decker Kangaroo-pouch Flying Disc Paper Graph Model for Synchronising and Playing 8 Oscillators", the machines were recorded during the mid-50s by Grainger's collaborator, Burnett Cross. "Had Grainger lived longer," wrote biographer John Bird in 1976, "and been able to continue his experiments with more sophisticated equipment he would not be very far removed today from some of the electronic extravaganzas of such groups as Pink Floyd."

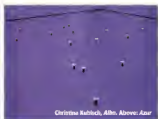
"A gasoline-driven generator in the entrance hall was soon pounding away; its power plugged into the mains. Even this small step immediately brought the building alive. However, in the tape-recorders, stereo systems and telephone answering machines, Holloway at last found the noise he needed to break the silence of the city." — J.G. Ballard, *The Ultimate City*

"What interests me is sound moving from its source out into space." Alan Lucier told Michael Parsons in *Resonance* magazine, "In other words what the three-dimensional quality is. Because sound waves, once they're actually produced, they have to go somewhere, and what they do as they're going interests me a lot." The articulation of space through sound has been a potent agent for deconstruction in 20th century music making, either by dissolving the frame, dispersing the sound-source or absenting the composer/performer. In his 1974 book *Experimental Music*, Michael Nyman

monochords, optical illustration of acoustical beat frequencies, the action of fog, hail and snow on sound, echoes from flames, vibrations in metal plates, an analysis of sirens and the "clang of piano wires"

Although they were conducted with scientific rigour, the aetherial nature of sound imbued these experiments with an air of mystery. Smelling faintly of the alchemist's laboratory, they were less bizarre versions of Raymond Roussel's literary creations. Staged for one week at the Parisian Théâtre Femina in 1911, Roussel's *Impressions D'Alrique* featured among its scenes the trained earthworm whose undulations in a mica trough dropped mercurial water onto the strings of a zither to produce complex melodies. Roussel's fantastic inventions lay in an interzone between vaudeville, anthropological surrealism and future audio art. A fictive art that was improbable yet tantalisingly possible, the living sound sculptures of *Impressions D'Alrique* touch sensitive areas of cruelty, dream, perverted science, alien systems and an atavistic social subversion.

Buried in the interstices of chance and surrealism were the elements that demanded new tools for creating sound, new systems for organising it, new spaces in which to hear it. Born in Oakland, California in 1901, Harry Partch began to abandon the traditional scale, instruments and musical forms in 1923 after finding a copy of Hermann Helmholtz's *On The Sensations Of Tone* in a library. Like Antonin Artaud, Partch was driven by a vision of total theatre that would inspire audiences with unheard sounds produced on previously unseen instruments. Unlike Artaud, he set about constructing the machinery to create it. Partch's monumental book, *Genesis Of A Music*, completed in 1947, was a manifesto for his Corporal music. "The



Isted, Ives, Debussy, Russolo, Varèse, Schaeffer and Cage as composers who have "pioneered the use of 'music' to make us conscious of the life and sounds outside the accepted musical-social environment."

But Cage's #33, despite its huge importance, had limitations: "Cage's piece is 'hindered' by being set in a concert hall," wrote Nyman, "by containing no specific directive for the audience, and by leaving what is heard completely to chance." [Max Neuhaus] "remedied" this: An audience expecting a conventional concert or lecture is put on a bus, their palms are stamped with the word *listen* and they are taken to and around an underground railway system." Other Neuhaus pieces of the late 1960s used the telephone system, radio transmitters, swimming pools, power stations and subway entrances to create what are now called site-specific installations and events.

As art forms have merged, many individual works have tended to be categorized according to their prime element. Alvin Lucier's score for *Music On A Long Thin Wire*, a piece for audio oscillator and electronic monochord, concludes with the instruction "Light the wire so that the modes of vibration are visible to viewers." In a sense, this locates Lucier's piece as kinetic audio-visual art, rather than music, though the sound is available on CD.

Artists such as Len Lye, Tsa Wen-Ying, Jean Oupuy, Takis, Pol Bury, Jean Tinguely and Harry Bertoia incorporated sound into their kinetic sculpture, either as the activating element of a cybernetic system or as the by-product of motion. "Sound interested me enormously," Tinguely told Calvin Tomkins, author of *Ahead Of The Game: Four Versions Of Avant-Garde*, "it is another kind of material to me." Tinguely's *Hommage To New York*, gigantic, fallible and typically anarchic, was staged in the garden of MOMA, New York in 1960, self-destructing in front of an audience that feared for its safety. The spectacle included a radio that turned itself on yet nobody could hear it, an Addressograph machine that clattered into life and then fell over and stopped after one minute, an erratically mobile *lixion*, and a piano that had been doused in petrol, then set alight. "All the unforeseen accidents and failures delighted Tinguely," wrote Tomkins. "The fact that only three notes of the piano worked moved him deeply."

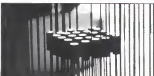
As resonant or amplified solids move and interact, activated by unpredictable systems, the patterns of sound they create take on the drama of natural emergent phenomena. The effect can be compared with the optical illusions of Op Art, yet the experience of seeing and hearing sounding sculpture could be immersive, more prolonged and emotionally deeper. For the late Harry Bertoia, successful as a sculptor from the 1950s to the mid-1970s, sound extended sculpture's articulation of space to fill the air and permeate walls. "It all started in the 1970s," wrote Chris Rice in *Holano* magazine, "when Harry purchased a bunch of Navy surplus beryllium-copper wires for use in his sculpting. In the process of working with these

rods, a few happened to knock against one another, producing a remarkably resonant and long-lasting sound." Many of the sound sculptures that Bertoia made were kept in his studio, a renovated barn in Barto, Pennsylvania. Instead of selling them, Bertoia made recordings of the sounds, activated by himself and his brother Oreste, then sold the records in a series he called *Sonambient*.

The sound of Bertoia's sculpture was architectural — an articulation of a specific space — yet also oceanic — the articulation of infinite space. Like many other forms of music of the period, sound sculpture challenged conventional notions of performance: no composer, no performer, no beginning, no end, no narrative, no critical language of evaluation, some might say no point. Sound sculpture simply was and is: existing as a process that described space and shaped time.

John Cage's writings had implanted (at least) two important ideas: music grows out of silence and paradoxically, there is no silence, since the sounds of the world are invasive.

The UK artist Max Eastley began making sound sculptures in 1971, inspired by the wind and water-powered instruments of Athenianus Kircher and Robert Fludd, by Oriental whistling arrows and wind bells, by





Chaco MacMurdo's *Juntos Hoy*

the military tactic of a Chinese general who in AD 34 placed bronze kettledrums under a waterfall to scare enemy forces with their noise, and closer to home and the present, by kinetic art, Marcel Duchamp, John Cage and the American minimalists. Stringed instruments were sounded by wind or water, flutes were voiced by wind, water dripped into boxes, and metal plates and strings were struck by hammers driven by electric motors.

As Eastley's work became more focused during the 1970s, his interest in complex natural rhythms, microscopic sounds and long durations deepened. La Monte Young and AMM had described their music as a continuum, a stream of sound that flowed without pause, only becoming audible and evident to the public when it was performed with listeners present other than the musicians. The metaphor was influential, though Eastley's work implied that metaphor might become actual, his instruments sounding for as long as the wind blew or the motors (and the electrical power that drove them) survived. The music of sound sculptures could become landscapes or oceans of sound: continuous, diffuse, immersive, a conglomerate of inner rhythms that was endlessly engaging, an enactment of a process that seemed to hover on the threshold of nature and culture.

Although they are not a performance in the strict sense of the word, the best sound sculptures are theatrical. Argentine composer Mauricio Kagel used adapted, unusual, specially constructed and ethnic instruments in a number of his pieces, either to heighten theatricality or to challenge received notions of virtuosity and compositional form. *Staatstheater* premiered in 1971 at the Hamburg State Opera, was a music theatre work of consecutive actions, many of them featuring strange instruments: mouth drumming

using a plastic disc and wooden beater, a steel spiral whirled above the operator's head, then lowered to strange horn, a board of nails stroked with two double bass bows, a 'drum man' covered in tambourines, amplified were netting, a perspex water drum that dropped onto suspended cymbals.

Kagel's *Acustico*, produced in Cologne in 1969, used many strange sound-makers—bulb-rover's, balloons, a gas blowlamp, a cross-blower to modulate the timbre of a book's pages, clapper sandals, a miniature piano used for radio plays, a gramophone record played by a knife attached to a large paper cone, photocells and an audio generator. In Kagel's words, a "self-evident supplement to currently existent sound-makers", these arcane instrumental sounds were lined up as a cabinet of curiosities, their dry scrapings and whinnings, disembodied bangs, gurgles and tortured squeals, recalling Raymond Roussel, the physics of Chioldi and Tyndall, the monstrous vacuum and pressure system music boxes of Stephan Von Hueber or the self-made instruments used in improvisation by Evan Parker, Paul Lytton, Hugh Davies, Jamie Muir and Paul Bunwell.



Conceptual art, land art, ecology and the aftermath of Fluxus performance were pervasive influences on sound works during the 1970s, many of which seemed to be spiritual heirs of both Athanasius Kircher and Yoko Ono. Anna Lockwood's *Piano Transparence*—Pacific Ocean Number 5, composed in 1972 gave the following instructions: "Materials: a concert grand piano, a heavy ship's anchor chain. Bolt the chain to the piano's back leg with strong bolts. Set the piano in the surf at the low tide line at Sunset Beach near Santa Cruz, California. Chain the anchor to the piano leg. Open the piano lid. Leave the piano there until it vanishes".

Frustrated with the confines of the concert hall and the educated expectations of New Music's small audience, sound art aspired to a closer engagement with the environment and the auditor. Either directly or tangentially, the results were a critique of musical behaviour that was tried, even within the so-called avant garde. So Laurie Anderson performed on her *Vocophograph*, a turntable mounted on a violin and played by a needle in a bowl, or played violin while standing on a mooring block of ice. Bill Fontana proposed a project that amplified the singing tones generated by traffic crossing the Brooklyn Bridge, then sent a mixed version via satellite to other parts of the world, and Alan Lamb recorded the seagull humming

of telegraph wires in Australia.

From 1974, when she gave up flute playing for installations, Berlin-based artist Christina Kubach has used sound art to explore relationships of natural to technological, visible to invisible, and visual to acoustic, articulating symbolic space in specific sites with intangible sculptures of sound and light. Her *Clocktower Project*, for example, reactivated the bells of a clocktower at Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art. Kubach enrobed the tower windows with a band of black reflective solar panels. These registered the intensity and position of the sun, transmitting this information to a computer that assembled and played mini-compositions of bell sounds, sampled from the original 19th-century clocktower bells.

Many of the original parameters of sound art are still being explored, given a new spin by the post-Techno installations and actions of younger artists such as Pan Sonic, Rygi Ikeda, Danform and Scanner, or by the determinedly non-musical sound processes of Minoru Sato and Atsushi Tomiyaga in Japan, documenting the peripheral bug nose and fugitive crackle of loudspeakers saturated by steam or disconnecting electrodes planted in vibrating window frames. "When we reflect on the condition that most sound works have been requested by music," Minoru Sato wrote in his catalogue essay for the 1996 *Sonic Perception* exhibition in Kawasaki City Museum, "we are forced to think that the perception/consciousness of the aspect of sound as a phenomenon has not been valued".

A new generation of artists has also turned to sound as a major component in installation work. They range from Angela Bulloch's *Sound Clash Benches*, featuring a film by Jim Tenar, and her *Superstructure With Satellites* beanbags transmitting low frequency Theremin sounds, to Heni Dono's speaking and buzzing satires on power in Indonesia, and Marko Mori's video installations, particularly her *Miko No Inon* performance in Osaka's Kansai airport. Min playing a cyborg shamaness performing crystal magic in one of the trance 'In' transit spaces of our disengaged present.

Appropriately for the age of Manga, robot-bushy walters, *Phantom Phenose* droids and global position satellites, robotics has reappeared in sound sculpture, including Felix Her's sound-pressure sensitive robots, the automata of Pierre Bastien and Maime De La Rochefoucauld, and Chaco MacMurdo's distressed chachic and skeletal androids, playing drums like entertainers at a post-nuclear blast party. Perhaps they symbolise the post-musical condition: the club aesthetic, the Powerbook and downloadable plug-ins are the most recent strands in a 20th century musical trajectory that throws conventional performance routines into question. If there are answers to the question of how music will be performed, enacted or experienced in the 21st century, then some of them will be discovered in the past and future of sound art. *Dawn Toop* is curating *Sonic Boom*, an exhibition of sound art to be shown at London's Hayward Gallery from 27 April–18 June 2000.



# the primer

In the late 80s and early 90s it seemed as though some seismic fault deep beneath Japan had finally cracked, unleashing a tsunami of new and confusing groups onto an unsuspecting Western world. From the toxic multi-genre pile-ups of The Boredoms and the Magma-inspired operatic hardcore of bass and drums duo Ruins, to the technological meltdown of Merzbow, here, it seemed, was postmodernism run riot. The presumed exotism and reductive unknowability that has long informed Western perceptions of Japan, from the Victorian travellers with their rhapsodies of a miniature fairyland to the modern dystopian visions of William Gibson and Ridley Scott, was just the icing on the cake for many Westerners. Would anyone really have been so interested if these groups had come from, say, Belgium?

But within the glut of new Japanese discoveries were a handful of groups that referenced a long neglected and unfashionable seam of Western culture—psychedelia. Primarily from Tokyo, groups like White Heaven, High Rise, Kosokuya, Ghost and Fushizuka (and more recently, Acid Mothers Temple and the pop-psych groups of Osaka's Orig label) appeared as a weirdly refracted amalgam of 20 years of underground psychedelic music, spanning San Francisco hippydom, Düsseldorf Krautrock and England's early Prog scene. The fact that many of them were formed in the mid-80s out of the fallout from Japanese punk and New Wave might seem ironic to Western observers, confused by an apparent reconciliation of punk and its hippie enemy. But such a view doesn't account for the subtle changes that occur in the cultural assimilation process. Like the seemingly 'wrong' English slogans seen everywhere in Japan, assimilated imports primarily address Japanese needs. Despite any lingering similarities, they don't necessarily reflect their original meaning anymore. So with psychedelia after its absorption into the Japanese underground.

The Japanese fascination with Western music goes back a little further, to 1853, when Commodore Perry's US warships forcibly opened Japan to international trade. "Civilization and enlightenment" was the slogan of the day, as Japan embarked on a radical modernisation programme based on the mass importing of Western models, from military strategy and systems of law, to ice cream and the three-piece suit. Education too was reformed along Western lines, and Western musical theory was introduced in schools. Japanese popular music, it was decided, was too tainted with the immorality of the pleasure quarters. Besides, Westerners complained that it sounded like cats wailing



A bi-monthly series in which we offer a user's guide to the recordings of our favourite musicians and genres. This month, Alan Cummings takes a long, strange trip through the world of **Japanese psychedelia** Illustration: Savage Pencil

Over the next century, Japan studiously imported almost every musical craze that swept Europe or the United States. Imported musics created new Japanese heroines such as Junichiro Tanizaki's *Noboru*, who, as a typical 20s 'mo-ga', or modern girl, loves *buche men*. Mary Pickford and dancing to jazz. The post-war US military presence restored the traffic in Western music

after 15 years of Milicast disapproval. 1958 ushered in a rockabilly boom. 1963 was dominated by the twist. But a new, indigenous youth culture only really took root with the arrival of The Beatles and, oddly enough, The Ventures. The latter's January 1965 tour with The Astronauts triggered a boom in homegrown Ventures-like instrumental combos, and when the novelty of



instrumental music were off, more conventional, vocal-led groups. Sniffing a quick yen, record companies

scrambled to sign any group of young men with guitars. Professional rockabilly outfits traded their quiffs for mop-tops. A desire to ape Western role models in every detail resulted in bizarre notions of authenticity. For many groups, getting the right-sounding English name was essential, prefixing it with the definitive article even more so. Big cats (The Tigers, The Cougars, The Lions) and insects (The Termites, The Scorpions, The Spiders) were popular choices; other groups were more 'inventive', for instance, The Koppers, The Terrys and The Camabeats. Eventually, the music acquired a generic

description, Group Sounds (GS) to distinguish it from earlier forms of Japanese pop, which were dominated by solo singers.

As in Europe and the US, the late 60s were also a time of growing political and social dissatisfaction in Japan. Issues such as Vietnam and Japan's increasingly strained relationship with the US, as well as questions of cultural identity, and the incoherent nihilism of a newly affluent society no longer bound to the single, clear purpose of the immediate post-war years, helped form the backdrop to a vibrant *avant garde* arts scene that encompassed film, theatre, dance, music and graphics. The first flourish of Japanese psychedelia emerged when this *avant garde* collided with popular culture.

## The Mops

Psychedelic Sounds In Japan  
(Victor Japan WJL 18212 CD)

## The Golden Cups

The Golden Cups Album  
(Toshiba-EMI Japan TOCT10130 CD)

The GS boom reached its fevered peak in the spring of 1968, causing groups to search desperately for any gimmick or new sound that might give them an edge. That sound turned out to be psychedelic rock, and The Mops, hitherto undistinguished purveyors of beat music, became the first Japanese group to play it. Fortunately for The Mops, their manager had been holidaying in San Francisco in the summer of 1967. He returned to Japan dreaming that his young proteges could hitch a ride on the flower power bandwagon, even though it had yet to start rolling in Japan. It took just a few plays of the new Jefferson Airplane record which he had brought with him from America to convince The Mops he was right.

Their first album, released in April 1968, had the psychedelic thing down pat — a suitably colourful cover, ethnic clothing, extended fuzzed-out jams, a dash of angst, even a sitar on "Kienai Omo!" ("Unforgettable Memories"). Much of the record was given over to cover versions that signalled the group's new psychedelic allegiances, among them The Doors' "Light My Fire", Jefferson Airplane's "White Rabbit" and "Someone To Love", as well as "San Franciscan Nights", The Animals' heartfelt paean to the joys of the Haight. The Mops' engagingly cartoon-like take on psychedelia is all tumbling drums, frenzied guitar breaks and sincere (though mispronounced) vocals courtesy of singer Hiromitsu Suzuki. Nothing how well a theme tune worked for The Monkees, The Mops devised one for themselves, complete with catchy chorus: "But I don't care of them/So I'm just a Mop". Their enthusiasm, in the absence of the right chemicals, is utterly commendable.

The lack of psychedelic drugs was only really felt when The Mops couldn't supply the 'LSD party' set up to promote the album. Instead, they handed out dried banana skins to the assembled journalists, in the hope that smoking them would produce an appropriate *levitational* effect. But it was not all gloom on the promotion front — The Mops' frantic modernism impressed Toru Takamitsu and fellow *avant garde* composer Toshio Ichihayashi sufficiently for them to be invited to participate in *Orchestra! Space*, a major contemporary music festival. Ichihayashi composed a special festival piece for The Mops, prepared tapes and The Japan Philharmonic Orchestra. Sadly there is no documentation of this quinquennial 60s event, but by the end of the year The Mops had shed their kaftans

## the primer

and returned to the simple rock 'n' roll of their roots.

The Golden Cups' debut album *beat The Mops to the shops* by less than a month. It also bore the unmistakable stamp of exposure to California's Summer of Love. Formerly a house band at a Tokyo 'go-go' coffee shop, The Cups emerged from the engagement with a more assured technique and a broader repertoire, including topical hits like "Whiter Shade Of Pale" and "Got My Mop Workin'." James Brown's "I Feel Good" and Bobby Moore's "Searchin' For My Love." The album's psychedelic high point is an inspired cover of "Hey Joe," which begins with a double-time bass riff and skittering drums. The somewhat perfunctory chorus is scant preparation for the jawdropping freeform passage that follows, in which the drums drop out to leave bass and guitar feeding back against each other, before the guitarist scales a wicious solo. It was an unprecedented moment in the history of Japanese rock. Strangely, the group declined to pursue any of the new directions they opened up. Instead, they spent two albums metamorphosing into Japan's first and most popular blues rock outfit.

### Jacks

Karappo No Seikou: Taik Days  
(Nippon Columbia COCA1529B CD)

### Jacks

Vacant World  
(Toshiba-EMI TOC76604 CD)

While most GS groups struggled to keep abreast of fashions on the US West Coast, others, notably The Jacks, pioneered their own routes. Yoshio Hayakawa, a student at Tokyo's Wako University, founded the group in 1966 as a folk trio called Nightingale. After several line-up and name changes, they coalesced into a stable quartet by the summer of 1967. After providing the music for an avant-garde theatre group, they spent the rest of the summer negotiating round after round of the All Japan Live Music Contest, only to be beaten into second place by The Frigates (who were never heard of again).

The vanquished Jacks fared better, impressing one competition judge, Japanese jazzman Sadao Watanabe, who helped secure them a deal with a minor jazz label, Taik. Their first two singles were released in March and June 1968. Recently reissued together on a Nippon Columbia EP, these first four Jacks tracks sail sound staggering. The music floats in a hushed and meditative trance state around Hayakawa's bleak vocals. Their signature track is "Marianne," which was later covered by John Zorn's Panikler (with Ken Hano on guitar and vocalist Kuchi Makigami, the track is included on the Taikiki 4CD set, *Collected Works*) and Hano's Fushitsusha (on Tokyo Flashback 2). On a formal level, it is a perfect study in ominous shading, featuring shimmering non-linear percussion and Haruo Murohashi's deeply echoed guitar lines that tangle and stretch in a downpour of

fuzz and vibrato, in tandem with Hayakawa's pained wail, singing about raging storms on dark nights. The song concludes with the unsettling image of someone embracing Marianne's drowned corpse. Once heard, it's not easily forgotten.

Taik folded shortly after the singles came out, but Toshiba picked up the group almost immediately, releasing their debut album, *Vacant World*, in September 1968. Again, the album is a paragon of economy, with not a single wasteful gesture. As personally realised psychedelic universes go, there is little to touch it. However, the album received little acclaim, and ground down by the group's lack of success, guitarist Murohashi quit. The remaining members attempted to soldier on, drummer Takatsuke Kida switched to playing flute, vibraphone and sax, and the group recruited a new drummer, Hiro Tsunoda (who would later lead some of Japan's better Prog-psych units, including Sadistic Mika Band, Strawberry Path, Fried Egg and the highly recommended Food Brain). The group carried on long enough to record a second Toshiba album, *Jacks Super Session*, but it was obvious that the fire had mostly gone out.

### Kan Mikami

BANG!  
(JRC TOCT9322 CD)

### Kazuki Tomokawa

Hilton Bonardon  
(JPSF-PF059 CD)

In the late 60s, Japan experienced its worst period of social unrest since the end of World War Two. The issues that brought people out onto the street included anxiety over Japan's position on the Vietnam War, the continuing US occupation of Okinawa, and attempts by the government to renew the US-Japan Joint Security Treaty, which allowed for a massive US military presence in Japan. Matters were brought to a head when radical students seized the central lecture hall at the elite Tokyo University in July 1968 and held it until they were ousted by riot police in January 1969. Massive demonstrations occurred all over the country, but the focus was the vibrant Shinkyo area of Tokyo.

Because Japan's early psychedelic rock failed to make much connection with the political counterculture, the soundtrack for Japan's own Paris Spring was provided by legions of protest folk singers. The format was simple: anti-authority lyrics set to simple acoustic guitar strumming, but this form of personal and political expression was new to Japan. *Ikigai* concerns by 'folk guerrillas' were staged weekly during the spring and summer of 1969 at the west exit of Shinkyo Station, attracting crowds of up to 7000. In July, thousands of riot police, armed with batons and tear gas, stormed the area and crushed the movement.

The independent URC (Underground Record Club) label was set up to release albums by the leading figures of this burgeoning folk movement. Solo singers

Nobuyasu Okabayashi (the Japanese Bob Dylan, who attempted an unipolar turn to rock with the group Happy End), Wataru Takada and Tomoyuki Takashi, and groups such as Itsuhi No Aka Fusen (Five Red Balloons), The Folk Crusaders and Yasumi No Kuni (Land Of Rest), were all immensely popular live acts. If the 60s were relatively innocent, the tone of the early 70s was set by farcical episodes like leading novelist Yukio Mishima's failed attempt to set up an ultra-nationalist coup d'état and his subsequent suicide, and the bloodletting of Japan's Red Army terrorist group (which culminated in their 1972 attack on Tel Aviv airport, in which 26 died). Realising that self-righteous anger and simplistic idealism were no longer enough, a new breed of 'acid' folk singer began to emerge. The lyrics became more personal and intensely introspective, and the music made a corresponding shift towards the dark and hallucinatory. Singers like Kenji



Endo (who is still one of Japan's most revered alternative singers) and Masato Mami were the more publicly acceptable faces of this new tendency.

However, the real meat was brought to the table by two young singers from the bleak north of Japan, Kan Mikami and Kazuki Tomokawa. Their musical roots lay not in the imported protest folk of Woodie Guthrie, Pete Seeger and Joan Baez, but in the indigenous, oppositional music of northern Japan, and the popular, melancholic enka (most often described as a Japanese Country & Western).

Mikami, who had links with Japanese avant-garde theatre theorists such as Shuji Terayama (of whom more later) and Kuro Kuro, and the radical dance form *butoh*, got his first real break at the 1971 All Japan Folk Jambooree. The crowd of 25,000 had turned against many of the mainstream folk singers, booing them off stage or bombarding them with political rhetoric. However, Mikami's typically intense songs, riddled with vividly earthy references to death, mass murderers, gangsters, lakes of piss and masturbation, seemed to match the mood of the unsettled and unruly audience, who responded with wild applause. His controversial lyrics and abrasive

personality didn't go down so well with the authorities his 1971 debut album, *Mikami Kan No Sekai* (The World Of Kan Mikami), was "voluntarily" withdrawn from sale, after objections from the music industry's self-censoring Ethics Committee. But the most adventurous of his URC albums is *BANG!* (1974), which featured pianist Yosuke Yamashita's quartet and other jazz musicians. The title track is a bewildering psychedelic collage of free jazz blasts, musique concrète, tapes and Mikami's unique voice, silky and caressing one moment, soaring and screaming in agony the next. The record also contained maudlin ballads, an epic tribute to a convicted murderer, and ended with a rough and rousing samba. With the collapse of the student movement, Mikami entered his wilderness years, which lasted until his career was revived by the PSF label in the late 80s. Since then his position as one of the most perceptive voices in the Japanese underground has been strengthened by his musical collaborations, such as Vajra, the trio he shares with Keij Hanio.

Like Mikami, Kazuki Tomokawa is also an actor and poet. But his songs tackle angst in a more lyrical fashion, with delicate colourings and deceptively opaque natural imagery. Though he also appeared at the 1971 Folk Jambooree, he didn't get to release his first album until 1975. However, the best introduction to Tomokawa's world is his 1995 album *Hein Bonadara* (A Solo Dance Of The Dead), which provides him with a wonderful backing group, including Japan's late giant of free music, Motoharu Yoshizawa, on homemade electronic bass. The multiplexed sound of Yoshizawa's bass provides an eerie background to Tomokawa's wistfully strummed guitar, as his voice rises, screaming and splintering, over a faltering rhythm. Fans of intense Prog-folk should also check out Tomokawa's *Sakura No Kuni No Chiu Naka O* (Within The Country Of Falling Cherry Blossoms) (King Records KICKS B115 CD, 1980), which was arranged by the legendary JA Seazer (see below). The final track is a 15 minute masterpiece that explodes from a wind-blown beginning into a maelstrom of chanting choirs, full-on guitar and Tomokawa's deranged howling.

## JA Seazer Recital

Kōkyōko Junreidō  
(Belle Arque BELLE ARQUE 5768 CD)

## Tenjo Sajiki

Aho Bune  
(P-Vine PCD1-466 CD)

One of the special characteristics of Tokyo's avant garde counterculture in the 60s and 70s was the close links connecting its most important theatre practitioners and the underground rock scene. The two most famous companies were Shuji Terayama's Tenjo Sajiki (The Gallery), and Juro Kari's Jojo Geijo (Stuntion Theatre). The latter were notorious for their

guerrilla performances in unusual locations around Tokyo. Both companies acted as artistic centres of heavy gravity, drawing in musicians (Kan Mikami, film makers (Nagisa Oshima, Kōji Wakamatsu) and visual artists (Tadanori Yokoo). The links forged at that time sustain to this day. Mikami had appeared with Kari's group on several occasions. The singer introduced Kari to Oshima, one of Japan's most radical film directors, who subsequently cast him as the main character in *Diary Of A Shinjuku Thief*, and later gave him a part in *Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence*.

Mikami and Shuji Terayama both came from the Aomori region of northern Japan, and inevitably, Mikami was taken under Terayama's wing. Terayama had first gained notice as a radical poet working in the ancient tanka form, but his unique vision soon expanded to encompass film, theatre, novels and general agitation. His experimental theatre company,



Tenjo Sajiki, was idolised by disaffected youth, and its base of operations in Tokyo's Shibuya district became the destination of choice for many young runaways.

A young student of graphic design, who had adopted the name of JA (Julius Arnold) Seazer, also made his way to Terayama's Shibuya HQ. In a country that likes to categorise, Seazer had already secured a name for himself as one of the Four Shinjuku Hippies, and as Japan's Long Hair Brother Number One. Although at that point he had never picked up a musical instrument in his life, he was given the job of the company's musical director at his first meeting with Terayama in 1969. For the next dozen years, he was Terayama's right hand, composing and playing the music for almost all of his films and plays, as well as giving his own recitals. The music that he developed to match Terayama's hallucinatory blend of freakshow imagery, discarded popular culture, European radical thought and twisted psychological hang-ups was an equally fascinating blend. Traditional festival percussion and sekkyōbushi narrative music collides with Carl Orff and Pierre Henry, as various elements linked by the pulsating throbs of contemporary 'left rock' — the Japanese blend of heavy rock and Progressive psych,

as practised by groups like The Flower Traveling Band, whose guitarist Hideki Ishima had worked on the soundtrack to the best known of Terayama's early works, *Throw Away Your Books And Go Out In The Streets* (Victor VCL-23056 CD).

Aho Bune (The Ship Of Fools) best illustrates how music is an integral part of Terayama's work. Sponsored by the Shah's daughter, it was premiered in 1976 at the 10th Persepolis Arts Festival in Shiraz, Iran, where it was programmed alongside works from the cream of the Western avant garde: Peter Brook, Robert Wilson, Merce Cunningham, Xenakis, Stockhausen. The work alternates between spoken sections, which build seamlessly into almost operatic workouts on a Magma-like scale, and more visual instrumental sections. Seazer's Prog organ features heavily throughout, and the work is ripe with the scent of decadence and insanity. Less dependent on the



visual element, 1973's *Kokyo Junreidō* (Border Playmate Song) is an easier way into Seazer's musical world. Typical of the recitals he frequently gave in the mid-70s, the recording features many of Tenjo Sajiki's leading actors, providing a typed-up choir to some pieces. It also features the fine guitar soloing of Takashi Mon throughout.

## Les Rallizes Denudes

Les Rallizes Denudes 77 Live  
(ISOE 0400 CD)

## Les Rallizes Denudes

Les Rallizes Denudes 67-68 Studio Et Live  
(ISOE 0107 CD)

## Les Rallizes Denudes

Les Rallizes Denudes  
(Ethon Mousek Co Ltd VHS)

Without a doubt the most mysterious of all Japanese psych groups is Les Rallizes Denudes, who are sometimes also known by their Japanese title, Hadaka No Rallizes. Rumours abound of their violence, their



High Rise

connections with Japanese biker gangs, and even their current whereabouts. What is or was a raïze, and why it should be naked remains unknown. A large part of their mystery lies in their reluctance to make 'product' available. Although they have existed since 1967, until 1991 their only recordings were on an obscure compilation (recently bootlegged on LP). Then suddenly, three CDs and a video of live and studio recordings spanning 1967-77 appeared simultaneously. Released by the group themselves in editions of several hundred copies, these recordings rapidly sold out and now command astronomical prices.

The mystery that veils everything they have done extends also to their origins. It is said, however, that they formed at a university in Kyoto in 1967, at the height of the Group Sounds boom. Soon after their first gig the following year, Raïze became involved with the only avant-garde theatre group in Kyoto, Gendai Gekip (The Modern Theatre), but their insistence on using massive volume on stage led to a revolt by the actors and the subsequent dissolution of the theatre group. During this period, Raïze began to use mirror balls and strobe lighting to further disorientate audiences already dazed by the noise assault. Popular history also has them appearing at the 'Barricades A-Go-Go' concert in 1969, organised by the student revolutionaries occupying Kyoto University at the time. In late 1970 they moved their base of operations to Tokyo.

From their earliest days, Raïze's psychedelic concept was relatively simple. Over a simple repeating bassline and drum pattern, the guitarists (sometimes leader Takashi Mizutani alone, other times with a second guitarist) improvise at extreme length and at massive volume. The way they ploughed through aranges of industrial noise, heavy fuzz and howling feedback, even on their earliest 60s recordings, prefigures much of what was to come out of the Japanese underground in

the years to come. Mizutani's interviews were rare, to say the least, but from his few statements it is clear that the darker facets of French symbolism and surrealism, and the theatrical avant-garde of Jerzy Grotowski and Julian Beck were influences. Favouring titles like "Reapers Of The Night" and "Flames Of Ice", you can make a pretty fair guess at the tone of Mizutani's lyrics, all sung in a cold and distant drawl. The consistently inventive 1977 live set is the best introduction to the group. Meanwhile, their self-titled video release is a must for connoisseurs of early rock footage, with much rare film of the group in action, though some viewers might be perplexed by its refusal to synchronise visuals with sound. Raïzes have not appeared in public for the past four years. The last reported sighting of the enigmatic Mizutani was accompanying free jazz lunatic Arthur Doyle in Tokyo.

**Keiji Haino**  
*Uma No Gawa (Milky Way)*  
 (MOMO 7V Dad MOMO 19 CD)

**Fushitsusha**  
*Live*  
 (PSF PSFD15/16 2xCD)

**Nijijuma**  
*Era Of Sad Wings*  
 (PSF PSFD31 CD)

If Raïze represent a black and dangerous magic, then Keiji Haino, who has been an unchanging figure in the Japanese underground for almost as long, is surely white magic. Haino's fascination with psychedelic pioneers like The Doors (his first break was playing harmonica in a late 60s Doors cover group) and Blue Cheer is well known. Less well known is his enthusiasm for the personal psychedelic spaces of Billie Holiday,

Country blues, Marlene Dietrich and 12th century troubadour songs. All of these form part of Haino's sustained and intensely serious investigation of the history of recorded sound. Sometimes it seems that Haino's entire life in music is his attempt to create a personal space where he can finally feel comfortable. Certainly, an overwhelming sense of haunted loneliness sets his music apart from sheets-of-noise merchants like Nuli and Merzbow, with whom he is often carelessly linked.

With his many different groups, some temporary, others long term, and his vast, ever proliferating discography (currently approaching the hundred mark, with the majority of his records being issued during the past decade), it can be difficult to know where to begin with Haino. But recommended starting points should include his contemplative fusion of electronic washes, ethnic instruments and deeply echoed vocals in the superlative late-night group Nijuma (which roughly translates as 'A melding of that which is and that which is not'). His trio Fushitsusha, on the other hand, attempt no less than a total deconstruction/reconstruction of



Keiji Haino

rock. Their unique brand of heaviness is best appreciated live, though their two double CD sets on PSF are a fairly close approximation of the experience. The first (PSF PSF3/4 2xCD) veers closest to San Francisco psychedelia's blues roots, and features a rare example of Haino's concurring harmonica playing, as well as the fuzz-bits of Mike Murai's second guitar. But their second PSF double live set is a better showcase for the group's variety. Solo Haino is even harder to pick, with full-out guitar and vocal works, shamanic percussion sets, electronic droneworks, and hardy-gurdy screech-athons to choose from. But the early electronic performance (from 1973) documented on the *Milky Way* disc is an enduring favourite for its evocative, spiritually charged atmosphere.

## Various

Tokyo Flashback 1

(PSF PSFD12 CD)

## High Rise

Speed Free Sonic

(Parrotcalle PLE11042 CD)

## White Heaven

Out

(PSF PSFD11 CD)

During the early 80s, interest in psychedelic rock began to grow among a small group of committed Tokyo music fans and musicians. A small independent record shop called Modern Music in Tokyo's Medamae district played a pivotal role in this nascent scene. First, it imported many of the obscure psych rarities that were gradually being reissued or bootlegged in the West. Later, as some of the regular customers and employees formed their own groups, the shop's owner, Hideo Ikebum, started his own label. His first release, in 1985, was the debut album by High Rise, *Psychedic Speed Freaks* (PSF Q1 LP). The label took its name from the record's title, and thus PSF was born.

The label quickly developed into the prime documenter of Tokyo's underground psych scene of the late 80s, and the *Tokyo Flashback 1* compilation provides both a vivid snapshot of the time and an excellent one-stop introduction to the PSF catalogue, featuring lengthy cuts by High Rise, White Heaven, Fushitsusha, Ghost and Marble Sheep & The Rundown Sun's Children (who would mutate into a Japanese version of late period Grateful Dead).

High Rise play fast, noisy and aggressive psych music, largely improvised but always with a purely rock sense of speed and acceleration. The group's leader, bassist Asahito Nanjo (whose parallel projects, Musica Transonic and Manliner, are equally characterised by genre-melting, rock-damaged genius), and its guitarist Munehiro Nariai, had both been involved in the Tokyo underground scene of the late 70s and early 80s which centred on a legendary club called Minor. Setting themselves up in opposition to the alternative Tokyo Rockers scene, involving groups such as Friction and Loard, the musicians associated with Minor were informed by improvisation, noise, contemporary composition and, of course, psychedelic rock. Minor nurtured many major figures, including Kenji Hano, Kosoku and Ton Kudo (whose euphorium-driven, Christian mystic pop-psych unit Maher Shalal Hash Baz are one of the strangest groups in the Japanese underground). All of these influences would feed into High Rise's highly volatile brew. Their staggering music filters contemporary rock practices through the speaker damage of prime Blue Cheer. There are few sounds as thrilling in the Japanese underground as that of Nariai's acid guitar burning into a solo. Always best appreciated live, *Speed Free Sonic*, a recent issue of a 1994 concert, is a great introduction to the High Rise sound.

White Heaven, formed in 1985 by a Modern Music

shopworker called Yu Ishihara, were the other main players in the late 80s Tokyo psych scene. Influenced by the looser acid feel of groups such as Quicksilver Messenger Service, White Heaven peaked immediately with its debut release, *Out*. The record mixes rockers like "My Cold Dimension" (sic), which burn with the interior flame of Michio Kurihara's hard-edged guitar, with more meditative tracks that seem to be floating in cold and bleak space.

## Taj Mahal Travellers

August 1974

(P-Vine PCD14634 2xCD)

## Ghost

Temple Stone

(PSF PSFD37 CD)

## Ché-Shizu

Nazareth

(PSF PSFD35 CD)

These three releases are typical of a strain of Japanese psychedelia which was more influenced by the limpid, droning sounds of German groups such as Can, Ash Ra Tempel and Amn Döll than Anglo-American acid rock. In each case, a dash of shamanic Asian consciousness distinguishes the music from that of the European forebears.

## Ghost



The music of groups like Ghost and Toho Sara (another of Asahito Nanjo's projects) can be looked upon as a rare reintegration of insular and normally Western-looking Japanese music with that of the Asian mainland. Their use of traditional instruments (interestingly, rarely Japanese in origin), and their references to the more esoteric elements of continental religion and philosophy perhaps indicate a late flowering of hippy consciousness. However, both the instrumental profile and the pan-Asian bias of such groups were prefigured in the early 70s by avant-composer and violinist Takehisa Kosugi's drone-improvisors, Taj Mahal Travellers. Like Ghost, whose Temple Stone documents meditative performances at temples and other sacred spaces, Taj Mahal Travellers had a predilection for playing on beaches and hilltops, integrating their stoned rhythms with natural sounds.

The dream-pop psych unit Ché-Shizu are one of the rare examples of a traditional Japanese instrument (in this case, the three-stringed *kokyu* bowed lute) being used in a psychedelic context. Nazareth is a sometimes shambling compilation of their live recordings and features the fascinatingly atonal sound of Ché Muro's *kokyu* drifting through the cracks of conventional melody. The group's interest in traditional English folk music is just one more indication of the breadth and complexity of underground Japan's continuing interaction with the West.

# invisible jukebox

Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on — with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear. This month it's the turn of . . .

## Blixa Bargeld

Blixa Bargeld is leader of the Berlin group *Einstürzende Neubauten* (EN), and the guitarist in Nick Cave's *Bad Seeds*. Born in 1959, Bargeld came into contact with his hometown's cultural underground via the music cassette shop he used to run as a front for his various punk-related activities. An early version of EN participated in the high profile 'Geniale Dilettanten' event in Berlin, the title of which — *Genius-Like Dilettantes (sic)* — helped define the Berlin underground's defiantly anti-academic ethos of the early 80s.

From its inception in 1980, EN deployed a variety of sound sources — junk metal percussion, industrial machinery, 'slavering dogs and an unlyrical screaming' among them — and the group's early concerts were near riots. In the former West Germany, they were indeed taken as 'die Berliner Krankheit' (Berlin sickness), under which banner they once notoriously toured. The group continued to modify their working methods in order to preserve spontaneity, both live and on LPs such as *Kollaps* (1981), *The Drawings Of Patient OT* (1983) and *Hölzer Mensch* (1985). Just as EN pushed sound and performance to provocative limits, Bargeld's interest, less beyond music as an end in itself. Within the framework of EN, this became increasingly evident in the group's theatrical collaborations with, among others, the late East Berlin dramatist Heiner Müller.

Of late, Bargeld's solo work has been exploring the sound and shape of language. As part of Nick Cave's recent *Meltdown* series on London's South Bank, he performed a solo piece, *Rude! Speech*, and the *Hansel-like Execution Of Precious Memories*. At the same time, he exhibited the hotel bathroom photos he's been taking since 1990, and conducted his solo *Philosophical Tournaments* in a Kings Cross gallery set up as a boxing ring, where the Jukebox took place.



**ARVO PÄRT**  
**"Cantus in Memory Of  
 Benjamin Britten" from  
 Tobula Rosa (ECM)**

I expected something like this. I don't know which recording this is, but I heard it in the Midtown festival

too! It is Pärt's Cantus

When did you first hear it?

When we recorded [1993's] *Tobula Rosa*, our then associated member, Roland Wolf, who is dead now, said that somebody called Pärt had made a record also called *Tobula Rosa*, and that it was very good, from one of his best periods of composing. At an in-store appearance, when we sign records in return for a fee of getting some records from the shop, I got his *Tobula Rosa*. I believe somewhere in the United States. That's where I first heard it. I liked it immediately, yes.

I was listening to Henry Gorecki before his famous chart success and that was about the same time. Since then, it's become very stylish. Do people call it "spiritual minimalism"? It was called "Catholic minimalism" first. That's what I called it, and once people noticed Goya Kanchick, they had to modify the term into "holistic minimalism." I don't think the term suits any of them. Some of Gorecki's compositions I still think are amazing, certainly, but I think it's very unjust to reduce them just to that, because they can be very wild. His solo piano pieces are... It's horrible how this has been devalued by being used as background for every second cultural TV programme.

**There is a descending melody for strings on "The Garden," from [EN's 1996 album] *Ende Neu...***

Which is similar to the Contos, yes. It was happening at random. For "The Garden," I first had a sentence that I overheard someone saying at the Prado. I think at some point it never really developed from there to the constant note that runs throughout the song until Alex [Hacke] said, "And then it starts to rain." It never occurred to me that it actually does start to rain. I'd just written a descending melody in the same key and then another and another. I put them together and it sounded like that.

**An unconscious heaven?**

It was. At the moment that we recorded it — I wrote it on a keyboard — I was very much aware of what the similarity is, but it is not a choice to make it sound like that. But this Part is a very good record. A friend and I drank a bottle of abstinence in my house and listened to this once. You have a feeling of being totally clear

**TON STEINE SCHERBEN**

**"Hacht Kaputt Was Euch Kaputt  
 Macht" ["Einheitsfrontline"] from *Worum Geht Es  
 Mir So Drecks?* (David Volkman Verlag)**

Hey you really did some research? [Blaiss sings along.] Their singer Rüdiger Resner did last year. He was a friend of mine. There's a record of the funeral performance where Neubauten actually performed "The Garden" at it. He was the best German singer ever in the true

sense of the word for me, because he was singing in German at a time when nobody was doing that. I think that one of the most important performances I ever saw in my youth was actually Ton Steine Scherben playing. They had to leave Berlin at a certain point in their career because they were hassled by the police non-stop. They were very political, they were the first over independent rock group because they released the records themselves. They had a sentence on the front of their records saying, "Tell us who these records shops that sell records for more than... " — an idea that Grass would follow 100 years later. This was in the late 60s, early 70s. This was a cardboard sleeve stapled at the four corners with a record in the middle. They had their own publishing company, production company. They did everything themselves. Neubauten often rehearsed in their studio.

**There's a point where the song goes into the Hanns Eisler march "Einheitsfrontline".**

This is the point you mean, but it's not Eisler. [Blaiss's wrong: It is a Brecht/Eisler song] Are you interested in the music theatre of that period? Lenya, Brecht, Wolf?

I'm interested in the whole place where the music of the German tongue breaks up — due to the Third Reich — and not having any more continuity. It stops with Lenya and Eisler. I'm not just interested in Lotte Lenya. It's very hard to rediscover some traditions that were there — when it was normal to sing in German. It still isn't, but it's getting more normal. This was Ton Steine Scherben's first record, but if you don't speak German they don't make any sense. Believe me, this man was the best German singer.

**AMM**

**"Later During A Flaming Riviera Sunset" from  
 AMM/Music 1966 (ReR)**

Things like a low drone, eh? [He listens for a few minutes.] I haven't the slightest idea.

**It's AMM.**

I still haven't the slightest idea what that is.

**They are a UK total improv group. This was made in 1966, when the Marxist composer Cornelius Cardew was a member. Their approach to music was resolutely anti-capitalist/consumerist.**

It sounded like the start of "Headcleaner" [from EN's *Tobula Rosa*] actually. Does it go on like this?

**For 27 minutes, yes.**

The length of this record is certainly stretched to the maximum. 74 minutes, 25 seconds [This is the expanded CD version of an album first released on Elektra]. A double LP [He flicks through the CD booklet]. Ah, transistor radios. We used radios without knowing it was a Stockhausen route.

**How has the nature of EN's improvisation and its significance to you changed?**

We still improve a lot. We used to improvise, even for every live performance, up to the point where we didn't know how or where we were going to start. But we automatically fall into patterns after a while. There are some shadows that you just can't jump over. Patterns in

your head or the way you conceive music. We do prefer to improvise inside certain parameters, saying, "It should be like this, or 'That object should be in it.' There's always a process. I still believe that you can play and find something out, about the meaning of life, of the world, how everything that is meant to be, like you would in an empirical experiment in natural sciences. For that reason, you have to set up the experiment in a particular way — you can't just do anything. That's probably how it has changed.

**Does anything like AMM interest you now?**

It would interest me more to see it live. I have a curious fondness for music that does not seem to have any meaning, that seems freed from all particular laws that seems to consist of disconnected molecular musical elements. It can go wrong, it can be very intense — especially in a live situation where you don't know what might happen. Things can come together in a very magical way.



**ROBERT WYATT**  
**"Las Vegas Tango Part  
 II" from *The End Of An  
 Era* (Columbia)**

Once again, I haven't the faintest idea [He looks at the sleeve]. Oh, Robert Wyatt.

**He multilayered his voices with the equipment available to him in 1970. You're doing something similar in your solo series, *Rede/Speech*, but with more sophisticated technology.**

Actually, quite simple for modern standards of technology. But Wyatt made some very nice records in the late 70s. I really liked his versions of "Carnarara" and [sings] "Stalin wasn't stealing when he told the beast of Berlin." ["Stalin Wasn't Stalin."] It is necessary for some songs to be rediscovered every now and then.

**Is working with non-verbal sound on *Rede/Speech* a new freedom?**

When I started singing, it was in a non-verbal way. A couple of punks asked me to join their band. They had a guitarist already, so I started singing non-verbally. It's a particular method that developed within me and it opened up channels where the words that just came in were outside of my direct responsibility. I continued doing that throughout the first two Neubauten records. First some kind of music would be established and then I would vocalise over them until suddenly words came out. They would form patterns and, if you're lucky in the end, you could talk about a text. That's the way I started and it's still what I rely on for these speech performances. Nowadays, I have some starting point, but sometimes I do things that I don't even know where they come from. I don't feel responsible for them. I'm just happy that I'm able to somehow open the channel and something leaks in from beyond. I believe these words do carry something. They are outside my responsibility. I can't criticise or judge them. It's interesting to reach a point in language where you

## invisible jukebox

can detach yourself from meaning and focus on sound and shape. Yes, and words also have roots. Some words work outside their surface meaning: For the London performance of *The Execution Of Precious Memories*, the two texts I chose from more than 100 questionnaires [which had been submitted by audience members] had sections that have seemed so totally unimportant, but you know they would reverberate on everyone else because they can find similar experiences in their own past. Will the next record be a woman?



**MASONNA**  
**"Inner Mind Mystique I"**  
 from *Inner Mind Mystique*  
 (Release)  
 [Immediately] I've played with him and I think he's fantastic. This is amazing. I can't tell you which piece

this is. I don't have any of Massonna's records, but I do have his business card. He's totally fond of psychedelic music: he has a record shop in Osaka stocking old vinyl. He wears a belt with self-built FX units on it, little switches with red and green lamps, and a pick-up in his hand. And that's all. It looks like a fantastic dance he stands there and yells into the pick-up and runs over the floor with it and up the walls. Now and then he throws the switches and it is total noise. I was totally fascinated. I love the idea of simplicity and I really love this maximum reduction to nothing—that he incorporates everything in his environment. I did *The Execution Of Precious Memories* in Tokyo with Massonna and Merzbow, among others.

When Neubauten first played in Japan, they had a massive impact. I don't know if Massonna saw us then but somehow the ground for noise for its own sake and for something beyond language is very fertile in Japan. It has so much of an anti-hierarchic or anarchic quality, it seems to make perfect sense to the Japanese youth. I still think that the best noise musicians are there, especially in Osaka, not so much in Tokyo. There's a noise music culture, but it's a whole association of people who just make noises in the most bizarre way you can imagine. Of course, I really like that. It's mindcleaning. Massonna's performance is brilliant.

### COIL

**"How To Destroy Angels" from *Unnatural History* (Threshold House)**

It's "How To Destroy Angels." Coil's music for male sexuality. I think it was in two parts. It's all metal. I can't prove it, but I assume, that to be alchemically correct, it was all iron.

Coil tried to use noises to induce bodily effects. You have always had an interest in systems of knowledge that link the abstract to the physical.

I am fascinated by the idea of concepts that are complete and hermetic in themselves. Language is one of them, but any kind of subversive philosophy would be like that, too.

**Red/Speech** had seemingly interlinked sections concerning the planets and DNA spirals. As I said before, I'm still interested in making set-ups that are experimental in a way that's akin to natural science. I believe that you can find things out through music, in the way that someone else could do in a lab. Both the planets and the DNA piece are pseudo-scientific entertaining experiments that you can follow aurally. Once you concentrate on speech, you have to concentrate on it, you get sucked into my way of thinking. I don't know what's happening next or my reaction to the next record, but you can see and hear what happens.

### BASIC CHANNEL

**"E2-E4" from *Basic Channel* (Basic Channel)**  
 [Listens for a few minutes.] I have no idea. I'm wondering if something else is going to happen...hm... It could turn into something really nice, or it could just stay as an Ambient backing track forever.  
**Basic Channel are a Berlin production team featuring Moritz Von Oswald, who used to be in Palais Schaumburg. Oh, I know him. In fact, I may have this record. The original Palais Schaumburg had Muthi [FM Einheit, former EN member] as the drummer.**  
**"E2-E4" is titled after a solo album by the former Ash Ra Tempel guitarist Manuel Göttsching. Not much more happens.**

I think that's true—that's what it lacks. You know, it starts like the first Mute album from DAF. It sounds to me like someone is trying to get that Korg synthesizer sound from 20 years ago, those cheap and simple effects they used at the beginning. You have a wonderful start on DAF's *Die Kleinen Und Die Großen* featuring this kind of electronic thing rising in volume very slowly for about two minutes—a fade-in that you would never have on a pop record. But then someone starts to sing and there are drums and other sounds coming in. That's the point for me where it starts working. This is certainly a music that has a particular function, in lots of circumstances, it could work very nicely, but it wouldn't leave the wallpaper effect.

**It has no compelling effect on your body then?**

No, it's music for a modern design shop where you can find modern furniture. Satoru, the inventor of Ambient music of the music of furniture. I don't think he had something like this in mind. But then the furniture has changed since Satoru's time, that's a point. [Electro and Highlow] was a total surprise for me. They were talking about DAF and Kraftwerk. Suddenly it changed from a predominantly white music to a black music coming from somewhere else. A total surprise.  
**Clubs often talk about a Dionysian release in this kind of music.**

Dionysian release? I find monotonous music not disturbing. In the late 70s, it was still considered somehow frightening. The kinds of things Can were doing then wouldn't be blinked at now. I loved them absolutely. That's my youth. I still think Can and Kraftwerk are fantastic bands. What was so interesting about Can was their chemistry. They found a way to

play as if they were locked in neurologically with each other. They were basically about improvisation, they would never repeat anything. I saw them play twice during this time and they were the most magical band I ever saw then.

**Are Neubauten locked into one another?**

When we're good, yes. When we're not good, it's medium.

### HERMANN NITSCH

**"Sonnenorgel" from *Das Orgeln Mysterien Theater: Musik Der 80. Aktion Volker I. T. Tag* (Dom America)**

Orchestra? [A few minutes pass.] I'm afraid I can see the Nitsch title. I know what it is now, I didn't before. Well, he has finally achieved doing his seven day performances this year. Neubauten were playing Kessel Dokumenta are festival in B2, I think it was, and the attack of one half had relics from his performances. That was the first time I saw Nitsch's things, they were breathtaking. There's always been a lot of criticism of what he's doing—I'm a vegetarian myself—but that animals are killed, there's a lot of blood involved. But if something is really Dionysian, then this is it. It's certainly a transgression of boundaries and it's very much about being alive. Yeah, I really like him.

**Did you attend last year's big mystery theatre in Austria? No, we were all muted, but c'est la vie, work, no time**



### LAIBACH

**"Laibach-Apologie" from *Krst Pod Triglavom-Baptism* (Sub Rosa)**

Laibach doing a bit of Carl Orff sampling. When I heard someone yell "RAUS!", I thought it was them.

**Another jolly tune from Laibach,**

yes, it is possibly from *De Temporibus Fine Comedias* [Play Of The End Of Time?]

**Yes.**

He's underrated. Carl Orff is much better than just *Carmina Burana*. There are these old pieces which he didn't want performed anymore, where he did Brecht and all that. Orff basically drew a line under the *Burana*, and by that time it was the Third Reich.

**Orff was accused of being a Nazi sympathiser.**

He styled himself later as having been associated with the Weisse Rose resistance [the Munich based, wartime anti-Nazi movement] which is not necessarily the case, but *Carmina Burana* was hailed by the Nazis. Before that he wrote things with massive percussion, but he did Brecht, Franz Werfel, he did everything that was considered good at the time. He did a wonderful piece called 16 Intellectuals Praying To An Ork Tank. There's a wonderful Wergo CD with all the things that Orff banned on. He had a very strong emphasis on choir, orchestra and percussion. In the 1950s, when he only used original Greek texts from Sophocles and others, he worked on the language and the melodies. It's very interesting. There's a children's work, with instruments

that they could play. Do you remember *Badlands*, Terrence Malick's first movie? The music is from Orff's *Das Schulwerk*. They're hard to get, but very interesting.

How legitimate is it for one composer to appropriate the work of another?

I don't know how legitimate Neubauten worked with samples before they were called samples, when there were the first machines that they could lock in a sound. The first things we locked in were ourselves, and then things we couldn't access, basically strings. I think we had a long sample from Beethoven's *Pastoral* in one piece that nobody ever identified, and another where there were only Shostakovich string quartets sampled. We soon got very bored by the sampling business because it puts you in a studio situation which is highly unsocial and highly boring. One or two people can work in front of a monitor, not more. It's probably why those who work a lot with samples are doing so. As a group, which is a social chemistry to me, it's just boring.

Didn't Neubauten have an Orff-influenced piece on *Tobias Rose*?

Yes, well, not on the album, but one of two satellite EPs released at the same time: it's either *Malediction* or *Interim*. It was called — oh God, *Ubique media, ubique media, ubique media, daemnon, daemnon, daemnon* — that's how it went, it took its influence straight from *De Temporibus* also. That was written on the day the first Gulf War started. It was a commissioned work for the Canadian dance company, La La La Human Steps. They asked us not to write in German, but they didn't specify which language I took the liberty to write something that was mainly in Latin, just to teach them to tell us next time which language they wanted. The war had CNN and all the media shock value, that's what *Ubique Media Daemnon* was about.

**GIYA KANCHELI/KRONOS**  
 "Night Prayers" from *Night Prayers* (Elektra  
 Nonesuch)

I've heard it before, but I can't remember what it is. Sounds like Kanchik, whom I very much like. This is The Kronos Quartet; you can hear their style. There's another piece on this record by Franghys Ali-Zadeh [from Azerbaijan] and I've looked for her work all over. I can't find it. Sofia Gubaidulina is on this, too. She bounces rubber balls on strings; she was a pupil of Shostakovich. She lives in Berlin, too.

I went to a specialist record shop about ten years ago and found these Georgian records from Kancheli. His writing hasn't changed, it's just that these recordings are not as dynamic as the ones on ECM. There's actually a really good Sony recording in a series called *St Petersburg Classics* which has some Kancheli with full orchestra. It has a sticker reading, 'Warning: extreme dynamic changes'. The classical equivalent to the explicit-lyric sticker on a rap record.

Kandell is also marketed as a holy minimalist.

Some of his music probably is religious, but I disagree that his work is sacred in the way that others is. Part certainly is and is styled like that. Gorecki has, for me, much more of a social background. He is very Polish.

Even the famous *Symphony Of Mourful Songs* has a social aspect in taking the graffiti from a prison cell as writing music to that. Kanchel doesn't do that. There's too much poetry involved in his music and his thought. What's good about Kanchel is that he's a master in making things very short. The changes in movement are very quick and drastic. He boils down the contents of a symphony into 12 minutes.

## ALVIN LUCIER

**"I Am Sitting In A Room" from *With A Minimum Of Means* (Content)**

This is something that I have done as well. I did another performance last year in Berlin, not unlike the *Philosophical Tournaments*, which was called *The Temporary CD Brewery*. I set up a room in a gallery and did experiments. I recorded 68 CDs, made laboratory reports and sold them. It's funny that someone else did, too. I don't know this recording

**You know what is going to happen?**  
Yes. The frequencies of the original speech disappear as soon as it's from the Fluxus period. I became aware of Fluxus in my youth, through a documentary about one of their musical events on the German third programme, which was a cultural TV station. I recorded from the TV set with a microphone. Naked women on the piano, Cage, Stockhausen, Nam June Paik, it did fascinate me, in the same way Pink Floyd probably also fascinated me at that time.

**Bixia:** "I coulda been a contender..."

**SAINKHO NAMCHYLAK**

"Letter 1" from *Letters* (Leo)

This has some soothing effect to the body, some reassuring effect to the boundaries of the body. That's why the bodhran or dulamer is so popular in folk music. It sounds interesting, but I have no idea what it is. **Sainkho Namchylak**, the Tuva musician whose throat singing tones are as distinctive as the effects wrong from your vocal chords.

I know Sankho Namchylak. She was professor at the Hochschule für Dichtung in Vienna at the same time as I was professor there, too. I met her once or twice, we performed in the same radio play together, albeit on different days. She was teaching throat singing. I was teaching how to make out a form.

I am told you voiced the rebirth of the Mummy in the new Hollywood remake.

"I've been doing this kind of screaming for a while. I chanced upon this technique. I couldn't control it, and so I've had to learn how to develop it to the point where I could... I know I don't do it in a very healthy way. I can do it for a while without losing my voice. I was able to do 40 minutes of film. But you pump adrenaline into your body, there seems to be a biological connection between screaming and adrenaline release. When you do that constantly for a couple of hours, you just... [sighs], you're just so finished, you want to collapse!"

*Erstausstrahlung: Neubaumers new single "Total Eclipse Of The Sun" is out this month on Mute.*

WONG HANLEY HAZDEN





Leiden, The Netherlands, late September 1999. As you enter the Museum of Archaeology, you are clutching the barcoded pass you received in the mail. Now, as you pass through the doors into the launch party for *iD Strip*, an anthropological project organised by Dutch art facilitators KKEP and in which you are an exhibit, your code is scanned by a code reader, your body investigated by heat cameras, infra-red beams and X-rays. A water scan the zebra-striped patch stuck to the drink and canapes you lift from the saker. Slowly, plasma screens on the walls of the room start displaying information on the individual guests: their arrival times at the party, their occupations, details of the companies and organisations they represent, the data displayed alongside thermosensitive colour images which even reveal the stomach breaking down recently ingested food.

Somewhere, an electronic ear is monitoring the ambience of this room. Above the crescendo of voices, clinking wineglasses and cries of recognition hovers a thin mushy vibration; you listen closely, and recognise the sound of your own voice, as it was in conversation only minutes earlier. A tray of glasses smashes on the floor, the sound seeps into floor sensors and hidden microphones, and circulates round the space via a series of speakers the size of credit cards. Over in one corner, you recognise the conductor of this electronic time-lag symphony, a pose-like figure in a skintight suit seated at the table spread with small flickering gadgets.

# remote viewer

The pose looks up from the table. "This is a really exciting thing to work on," he pipes up, "It's not about a 'Scanner' gig, not about a concert, but about a shared sensibility, and this is meant to be quite playful, fun." He grabs a microphone and wanders through the milling crowd, talking incessantly into the camera in your eyes. "People have all these end of millennium scenarios about being caught within digital technology, the work I do has evolved within digital media, you can have all these heavy discussions about that. But let's just relax for a minute, work with those, see how far we can take it."

Smile, you're being monitored. By Robin Rimboud, your genial host at the cocktail party for the turn of the century.

For Robin Rimboud, aka **Scanner**, music is not an end point. Instead, it is activity that defines the democracy of the digital world. Words: Rob Young.

part of a complex web of Photography: Tim Kent

"I really have lost the language for it," says Robin Rimbaud, staring at me from across his black banqueting table. "I don't know where it can live, how it can situate itself. I'm not convinced about it, I'm not sure what value it has." He's talking about his new collection of Scanner music: *Louwarm* instrumentals, how unsteady the notion of a new album sits with the way he's been working and living over the last few years. It's been a period of displacement that's forced him head-to-head with the notion of nomadism that was romantically banded about in the early 90s, when his brand of electronic surveillance formed part of the epicentre of this decade's flowering of creative electronic art music.

The room where Robin Rimbaud records his lukewarm instrumentals has few soft surfaces, but neither is it the hermit's cell some observers might expect. For a little over a year, Scanner Central has been this converted former Sunlight Soap factory in London's East End, commemorated in "Sonnemlicht", a track on *Louwarm*.

He may be a fetishist for hard edged furnishings, and rigidly teetotal, but there's one thing no one who's actually met Rimbaud face to face would dream of accusing him of, and that's monkishness. "So much of the work I do is about outreach," he affirms, "but maybe people don't realise that I'm not involved in certain things, simply because my name is not involved with it. That's the frustrating situation I've always argued that if people haven't liked all the work I've done, maybe they can be interested in the ideas." Like Jim O'Rourke, with whom he keeps close counsel, Rimbaud is often selected as a secret agent, the viral infection that will kick a sound or concept onto a different evolutionary path. When the American alt lounge outfit Combustible Edison invited him to work on their impossible World album last year, they perhaps hoped his minimalist ear would thin out their over-stuffed arrangements. In the end, inevitably, they didn't know quite what they wanted him to do, Rimbaud would arrive at the group's studio each morning to find his mixing desk mysteriously changed back to its original settings.

There have been several CDs of Scanner music issued in the past few years. *Mass*



and they became merely a texture I tried to integrate them, make it more like a grain. Now, a lot of the work is more focused, it's between macro and macro, but I'm not sure where it fits. Did it start macro and become micro now, and I'm focusing on smaller detail, or has it worked the other way? I'm not sure, because it's moved from an individual to a social aspect now."

Records and CDs are "temporary broadcasts", in Rimbaud's words. His current work locates itself in a distributed net of projects for different masters, and on a global scale. Albums are postcards shot out from the midst of feverish activity. "I don't feel I've made any clear statement with anything I've ever done," he says. "The Sub Rosa Live Series was very much like that. Journalists didn't understand that this is live, for a start, and there was only 1000 of them, and they've gone. It was only about that moment. That's what appealed to me about performance art, something that's happening in real-time,

*Observation*, *Spore*, *Delivery*, *Sound For Spaces*, *Louwarm*, as well as the Derek Jarman tribute, *The Garden Is Full Of Miral*, which was released under Robin's 'given' name. But there have been many other projects in a low key. A spoken word collaboration with the nasal-voiced Canadian post-human critics Arthur and Manouche Kroker. Live sessions with David Shea and Robert Hampson, which were then issued on limited edition CDs via the Sub Rosa label as a way of raising funds for future performances. A Techno album with Michael Wells, aka Signs Of Chaos. Sonic injections into the work of numerous other artists, including Nonplace Urban Field, David Toop, David Cunningham, Col. Laurie Anderson, Terrie Thaelmitz, John Oswald, Pauline Oliveros, DJ Spooky, Charlemagne Palestine, Orlando Gorge. What this method amounts to is a more modest engagement with the zeitgeist, one that attempts to have a catalytic effect while divesting itself of the glare of celebrity. In fact, for the longest time, Robin has been so much there as to become practically invisible.

there and then. People have misconceived an album, see it as some grand statement when in fact for me the emphasis is on all the other projects I do. The album is almost like saying, 'I'm still here, by the way', a tiny reminder, a little flag."

So, over the coming year, various Scanner-curated intrusions on public spaces are due, with less of the voyeurism of old and more of an altruistic bent. Commissions are coming in from 'straight' organisations and corporations, that nevertheless allow Robin to exercise his peculiar talent for cracking open the shell of consensus reality. One of them, *Surface Noise*, has already taken place: a surreal bus route that cruised London's backstreets late last year. In London, the event seems to have ushered in a new interest in the 'art walk', for example, two recent 'tours' tracing the footsteps of the late occultist/psychogeographer David Rodnitsky, and artist Janet Cardiff, both sponsored by the Actangel organisation, which also commissioned *Surface Noise*.

"*Surface Noise* was an invitation to work with the city," Robin explains. "I chose two

points of sound significance: Big Ben and St Paul's Cathedral. Big Ben as a point of regulated, formal sound that — particularly if you're English — regulates our news at night. But it's also something that is striking every 15 minutes. It's about a metre, a rhythm. St Paul's was more about a spatial quality, a spiritual peace, but it also has the Whispering Gallery where 50 metres across from a friend you can go "psst" and they can hear you. I like that idea, the tone striking through London, and the whispering sound. Originally Artaud was talking about me making a walk, but I couldn't imagine myself walking around with tourists holding an umbrella. So I chose the sheet music for "London Bridge Is Falling Down," and in a very Gagan way — this is certainly not a new idea — laid it over London, with the first note over St Paul's, the last note over Big Ben, and just followed that route over London."

In advance of the project, Robin visited the site where each note fell on the map. "I took a digital camera, took photographs and recordings on a Walkman, took the sound back to my studio, and made a composition from these different places, using Metasynth [software that can "read" a digital image as sound], but then morphed it with the original sound, so it became not just a piece of software speaking back to us. I didn't want to just produce a CD, so I thought: if the actual recording is about this movement across the city, why don't we just follow that through? So we hired an old-fashioned London Routemaster bus, took all the lights out, installed a PA system, to produce a magical mystery tour of London."

"I did it live each time, because on the roads you don't know if it's going to take 30 minutes or three hours. On the first night we had an accident down a side road, the couple having sex on the second floor of their house didn't anticipate a red double-decker bus parking outside with 150 people all staring through the window at them! It became very funny, like you were in a goldfish bowl staring out. It was fun, but was really important. It was meant to be entertaining. I wanted people to enjoy it, but then think about the sound they were listening to. I would use voices at times, I put a plate mic on the side of the bus, so it would mix the sound from outside, the engine and traffic, people outside. I was speaking to somebody about doing it in New York recently, even somewhere like Cairo, places that are so outside a traditional art aesthetic. For years I've wanted to do a tour of Africa, take electronic music there."

## You are where you are

Before Africa, however, you need a port from which to travel. Robin spent much of 1998 living in Liverpool as the guest of John Moores University, where he was appointed Professor of Sound. He can see the absurdity of the position in one sense, but agrees that the placement acknowledged the communicative, thought-nurturing force of his work.

"I've always avoided talking in academic, post-structuralist speak. I think it's a dangerous thing to do, in that it can alienate and push people away," he says. In Liverpool he would be visited by students "who would ask me, 'Is there such a thing as the avant-garde?', or they would sit there for two hours and record me waiting away." Sometimes he would act as a technical advisor if someone was having difficulty with equipment. "There's something that's so important to me, which is to share time and ideas with people that are about time and moving forward. I always liked the idea of acting as a catalyst, enabling an accessible event to occur."

Robin used Liverpool as a test bed for his focused drifts through the urban landscape. Stopstation premiered at the city's ISEA festival last September, was the result of his work with the students, involving location recordings of significant places, teasing out the language the city speaks — the title is Scouse vernacular, a challenge to fight "the language for me to work with the sounds of the city," Robin says, "the language and diction of a city, the different way a green man will operate in cities, the

different way the underground or police cars will sound, outside of verbal interchange." Experiences during the making of the piece reinforced what he'd previously discovered with his "controversial" mobile phone scans: microphones can seem threatening. "I went to a big shopping centre with Huak piped in, and some people were very suspicious about a bald person coming in with a Minidisc, and me, crouching on the floor, recording nothing. A security guard asked me to leave — you're not allowed to crouch down. If you think back to those stories about Burroughs and the Beat period, they were going round in hotels recording things, and I always liked that idea of the terrorist aspects of the microphone. I was involved in an action about five years ago to bring Buckingham Palace down. We all went down and played recordings of buildings guarding on Walkmans, held them up to the gates of the Palace while the guards just stood there." (It must have worked — Prince Charles has just announced that Buck House will no longer be the royal pad in the next century. Hurrah for Neosm!)

"A lot of the work I've done is about interference," Robin continues, "things going wrong. A lot of the things I listen to, as you probably know, is digital broken media stuff." He is referring to Gescom, Rehberg & Bauer, Fennesz, Terre Thaemlitz, Thomas Brinkmann, Pole and their ilk "musicians" who use digital noise to break into and shred musical scriptures. Poetry is syntax tested to its extreme, articulation re-articulated, linguistic scriptures explored to their fullest extent. Hackers are digital poets, in a sense, cracking an entry into the computerized languages that control, that establish standard practices, and tearing up the prescription by jamming in obstructions that splinter the syntax.

"The city is an organism which defies planning and prediction," writes Canadian radio artist Christel Migon, "the individual contains similar internal struggles. I am laughing but I feel like crying. I am not hungry but my mouth is stuffed. I am falling asleep but I've got work to do. I crack because otherwise I can't move. These are everyday occurrences, banal decisions, little mania. Nevertheless, their cumulation provides a kind of map of the internal in the case of crackers, there's a lexicon of cracks, an endless vocabulary of tearing apart. As the sound of the cracks echo, some, worse, others feel real. In all instances, a crack is when and where something breaks."

A few minutes' walk down The Mall from Buckingham Palace is the Institute of Contemporary Arts. This autumn, the ICA's gallery will exhibit Sound Polairs, Rimbaud's collaborative multimedia work with graphics expert Paul Farrington, which is descended from his research work in Liverpool. At the ICA, Rimbaud is returning to the venue of his Electronic Lounge club, which, for a period of four years between 1994-98, reinforced the notion of the DJ as part of the furniture, but also helped to contextualise and draw together strands of British underground music activity that were already converging in the freedoms opened up in the post-Techno, post-

Industrial wilderness. Building on the methodology he devised in Liverpool, Sound Polairs synthesizes sonic snapshots with new advances in digital imaging. This time, the points of sound significance are chosen by members of the public via a postal and e-mail survey. Armed with digital camera and Metasynth again, plus Farrington's software that produces texts generated by sounds, a shifting sensual map of London will be produced. "It's loose, open, but it's a public project again. It's another piece about outreach."

As is the other large piece Robin is working on for next year: *Sound Curtains*, destined for London's Science Museum, will permanently install sheets of sound erupting from pressure-sensitive spots in the museum's floor. "What it will throw down to you randomly," he enthuses, "will be recordings of science, the invisible sounds of science. Sounds inside the human body, the blood rushing, bones cracking and creaking, through to sounds inside computers, PlayStations, electricity, power stations, the sun — the language that science speaks to itself that we never hear. There are

two million people visiting this place every year. I don't want it to be hands-on or to wear headphones, because that immediately limits it. Then it becomes a physical object, which people have to queue up for, and which can break. The idea was that people in wheelchairs are also able to engage with it — it's a very open access idea."

## Nets are made of holes

The 20 minute Scanner piece *Cyber* will soon be released as the August instalment in the German Raster-Norton label's monthly CO series. 20 To 2000: The discs' strikingly designed cases are thin translucent scallops, and the COs only contain as much chrome as the music: the outer ring is transparent perspex. "Product design, logos and packaging has all become part of this aesthetic where we're all engaged in," Robin says, referring to the distributed community of electronic minimalists that stretches from Ryoji Kaida and Minoru Sato in Japan to Austria's Mega label, Chain Reaction in Berlin, Cologne's Kompakt family, Touch in London, Richie Haxton's Canadian Minus imprint. "There's an important aspect here, not only for sales, but also reflecting the sound. The whole 20 To 2000 series is about that it's almost telling you nothing. Record sleeves have such an importance... it's something I spend quite a lot of time on, trying to keep it as minimal as possible. Often when I'm trying to design, I'm removing stuff. The same with sound. I'm the cleaner, the Norton Utilities of sound, digging stuff out and saying, 'let's get rid of this'."

"The piece is a response to media saturation," he continues. "Gen Halliwell's a good example: she's had two million pounds spent on press, and her record only sold 25,000 copies. I've got friends that have sold 25,000 copies with no press whatsoever. It's quite extraordinary. A lot of artists, myself included, and the Raster/Norton people, are really playing against that. The sleeve tells you nothing — you look right through it. It doesn't mean the music is transparent, but this music's so clear. Pure's the thing word it makes it sound like a Lemi Liefenstein! fascistic approach, but it was a punty."

As the architect Adolf Loos put it, "Ornament is crime."

"Yes, it's the essentials, the bones, and sometimes the bones alone can be enough. That's why we're skinny people you and I here! I make a parallel with taking a tablet. It dissolves in the water, and you still see that water, and you have the essence of the tablet, and it disappears. When I've worked with other artists, I've always been taking stuff away the whole time. I did the production for this Combustible Edison record, just because you have a 48 track digital studio does not mean you have to record 48 digital tracks, because you become swamped. I've always liked the space between."

Many listeners find 'austere' noises problematic. Disengaged. How we become too coddled in analogue bubblebath comfort, to appreciate the beauty of clean lines? "I can understand those accusations. Listening to a piece of high-pitched digital sound that goes 'bip'... there's something very elegant and beautifully choreographed, but I can see that for some people there's not that engagement. I use a lot more organic

teenager. He spent an entire two years in self-imposed silence, so rigidly enforced that he had to drop out of his French course because it contained an oral exam. "I never understood it until I was 30," he says. "People build their worlds because it's their only outlet, and now I wonder, do I talk so much because I never spoke for two years?" I think why I talk about emotions as much as possible at the moment is because they were never ever discussed. And English families are the worst, my family lovely as they are, wouldn't talk about those things either. Some of the work is maybe an opportunity to work with these ideas of vulnerability, which I've only been coming to terms with in the last couple of years — with my change of life, the way my habitat has changed, moving home and these kind of things."

The unusual factor about his father's death was the fact that it was captured on video and shown on TV a week after it happened — a private, tragic moment exposed to a voyeuristic public. It goes some way towards explaining Robin's impulses to make intimate events public, via various media channels. "I've never thought about it like that, it's a good point," he replies. "I remember a week after he died, there was his bike passing by on TV, and you just sit there and think, 'That's my Dad.' It's weird dealing with the media when you're very young."

## Leave the world as you find it

You cross a threshold that takes you into the unknown, and you bring back something of what you find there. For an English underground group such as Coil, with whom Robin has been associated via remixes and the Derek Jarak connection, chemicals, stimulants and alcohol are often the shamanistic launchpads for darkside voyaging. In his own way, Robin is also concerned with capturing, hunting sound from inaccessible spaces and bringing it out, whether it's the private phone conversations he found in an airspace that proved more public than anyone thought, or location recordings from the restricted access sites which his art projects take him to. (There's one on *Luxembourg* — a computerised isotherm recasting the path through the lift system of the NatWest Tower in London, a vertical ratmaze.) But his method is more clear-headed. I ask if he would consider making, or ads, for, and he says, only half joking, "I refuse to do anything for smoking or alcohol — I don't want to advertise any of those two sins." Of his own straight edge lifestyle, he comments, "It has to do personally with an element of control. I realise. But I wonder whether, as I've never imbibed any of those things — not even coffee — I think maybe I can reach somewhere that most people haven't. I don't mean to be too abstract about that, but I wonder if there's that possibility of being so aware of stuff, when even drinking alcoholic drinks, or caffeine, can alter your consciousness like that. Keeping to a strict vegetarian diet and fairly regular hours... maybe that in itself is so unusual that I feel I can experience things differently. I realise now it's to do with an obsession with making things happen. I don't want to feel that anything else will interfere with that in a negative way. It's like a process of reduction, and I feel I've reduced things enough as it is. I can't reduce the

sound, a lot less original digital stuff. The noise in itself has a human association already wrought deep within it. I'm not a cold human being — I may seem it, the phons may seem austere and creepy, there's this bald alien creature staring out into the distance... but like all of us, we have our ups and downs. And I've done my best recently to engage with that."

**R**OBIN RIMBAUD IS GOOD" ran the legend for years, painted by schoolhoofers on guano-stained concrete underneath the railway bridge at Clapham Junction in South London. The graffiti was a fading remnant of a teenage period split in two by the loss of his father. There's a silent passer between Robin's childhood, with its innocent home taping of family meals, and his emergence as an art-obsessed

musician, and I can't reduce the water and juice and things.

"You want to leave as little impression physically on the world as possible?"

"Yes, and I actually like that. It's like being a small shadow, rather than a big stain." *Luxembourg* Instrumentals is out now on *Sublimar*. A Thomas Benikmann vs Scanner EP is released in September on Force Inc. I Love Free Chocolate, a collaboration with David Shea, is released this autumn on Sub Rosa ID. Strip, for which Rimbaud will provide a live sound mix, runs at the National Museum of Archaeology, Leiden, The Netherlands between 22-26 September. Sound Polaroids opens at London's ICA in October 99. A version of A Midsummer Night's Dream, soundtracked by Rimbaud, will be broadcast by Radio 3 on 3 October. A new Scanner Website is on-line at [www.fuse.com/scanner](http://www.fuse.com/scanner)





loops do reference dub, but the rhythmic swing and fancy pacing are distinctly American, though not quite as shi-sham as the instrumental P-runk of fifteen Spaced with B-movie soundbites. These are really streamlined gangsta tracks. Koolhaas versions of the superior funk which Colin Wolfe brings to a Dr. Dre session. The rhythms are unfussy and persuasive and Buckhead adds in plenty of Heavy Metal colourists.

The Virgin-signed guitarist with a KFC bucket on his head and a Japanese ceramic mask over his face also pops up on *E! Show*, with both Bran and DJ Deck in tow. According to the press release, producer Enryak "owns Tyrrell Studios" (it thought the point of *Blade Runner* was that Tyrrell Corp owned you), but *E! Show* doesn't attain the ensemble groove of *Devi Dub*, being a loose assemblage of looped rhythms, stop-go scratching, echoey basslines, gurgling electronics and TV samples. It's like a contemporary rap production denied urgency and determinate statement: in other words, rendered meaningless. Predictable beats, unthought-out harmonies and luscious production (all actually suppressed) add to the tedious. Titles like "Rage Of Terror", "Darkside Whiskies" and "Surf Mission" indicate the narrow purview.

Cutting up William Burroughs talking about cut-ups is almost too boring a device to relate (except to get these lockless noobies in trouble with the Burroughs Estate). What results is faceless drack, post-rock production on automatic.

REN WATSON

## Max Brand et al

In Memoriam  
8-42 005 2420

Max Brand represents a mystery. One of those Ferrari/Parmigiani figures who are or now (through the ministrations of young electronics buffs) receiving due attention, I was relieved to know that even the concrete moles at the Wire hadn't heard of him — which is a measure of the obscurity into which his pioneering, eclectic work has fallen. He had an exemplary 20th century life (go to [www.phonotunk.it](http://www.phonotunk.it)

for a fascinating resume) and the Pandora's Archive here is truly intriguing. Born 1896, died 1980 — which makes him as much Walter Benjamin as Walter Carlos — the playfully experimental tone of his work makes it sound as if he could have come from virtually any moment in the last half-century. The music itself — the sonic equivalent of Borges-like snippets of quotation and speculation — is a never dry or academic date stamped but utterly fresh, sparking an alternating current of melancholy and mischief. Brand even has his own frontier in one Burt Morris, who recites three wily self-referential texts.

There's such a wide spectrum of experiment on these 23 tracks, it's hard to know where to begin. The years-ahead

ethnological forgery of "Notturno Brasileiro (Jungle)" anticipates Faust, industrial music and even darkcore Tekno in its trained pulse, a series of tape (spillage "Fragments" and Moog soundings ring with the future A-Z of everyone from Sun Ra to 23 Studio to Scanner, three "Comericals" anticipate some of CoS's subversive toil ("Fragment 2" (52 seconds) and "Fragment 5" (36 seconds) by themselves seem to hold the star seeds of a whole spread of contemporary sound. This can be veined on the accompanying "tubul" CD featuring the

likes of Patrick Pulsinger and Curt Duda. After the max shock of Brand himself too much of the 'em plus disc seems merely to echo his own-brand disorientation and cannot compete with its loacely oddity. The best of it Ostermayer, EPR, Quenemberger-Kollwider — would probably sound good in any other context.

Brand himself cuts across context. On "Water 1 & 2" he has one foot in Verne and one in Spielberg's *Close Encounters* sonics. The live "Fragments" sound like Ron Granger on DM7 or insidier nodules to Sun Ra's intergalactic Moog postcards. Brand voices just enough juice out of his experiments to disturb the atmosphere then stops short. In "Text 2", Brand even anticipates my own last words: "If I understand you correctly you want to know why Max Brand does the things he does?" For sure, that, and a whole lot more.

IAN PENMAN



Isotope 217's Bob Mazarnek

## Isotope 217°

Utsonian, Automatic  
THRU! JOCKEY THRILLS CD

## Isotope 217°

Hodab/Utsonian Password: Leibor  
AESTHETICS 06 CD

"I'm working with a group of maybe ten people. Every minute there's another idea, another recording opportunity, another playing opportunity. It's impossible to keep up on almost overwhelming. Chicago's ridiculous right now." That's a quote from the comes, player Rob Mazarnek, an honour roll member of Chicago's post-rock/post-jazz new music fellowship, which means he's an associate of the various members of Tortoise, as well as Jim O'Rourke, David Grubbs, The Sea And Cakes Sam Prekop, a constant presence in The Chicago Underground Orchestra, Duo and Trio, and one of five current members of Isotope 217° (which also includes various Tortoise members). So if a key player like Mazarnek has been sent into a headspin

by the sheer volume of activity in Chicago's new asylum for white and black radicals, how are the rest of us supposed to fare?

The Isotope metaphor is lifted from Greg Tate's spot-on description of Miles Davis's mid-70s groups which featured Pete Cosey, Reggie Lucas, Michael Henderson and Dave Liebman. It feels like an appropriate way to define a unit such as Isotope 217°, which might well be the asylum's perfect houseband, a rainbow coalition of musicians who between them reconcile the worlds of Midwest funk, post-AACH jazz, improvisation and the digital edit across a distributed network of intense, democratic activity. Even so, I hesitate to invoke Miles's Horsemen of the Jazz Apocalypse yet again, if only because they are summoned from the depths every time a critic spots a group living up its jazz chops with a little superior attitude and so feels the need to add a little historical weight to the discourse. And sure enough, wherever you look, the antecedents for Isotope 217°'s trippy-deaky fusion have been reduced to one (guess who?). But from where I'm standing, other less prominent historical tributaries seem more crucial to the music featured on these two releases: particularly, the kind of Afrocentric instrumental funk which jazz musicians devised in the early 1970s as a response to both the dwindling interest in hard bop in America's black urban centres, and the socio-cultural imperatives handed down by the Black Power movement to get with the goddamn programme. I'm thinking of the kind of music issued by Detroit's Tribe label; Carlos Garnett's Muse recordings; Byron Morris's Unity project; Weldon Irvine's "Mr. Clean" — Wigg, brooding, superconscious music that was more brain-fried than body-rock.

Having said that, *Utsonian, Automatic* begins exactly like a Miles track circa 75, ie slap bang in the middle of a collective improvisation that by the time the engineer pressed the edit button had developed into a

pummeling three-note bass/drum vamp straled by arhythmic organ stabs. In place of the freeforms unleashed by Pete Cosey and Reggie Lucas, however, guitarist Jeff Parker unwinds a solo that follows a quizzical, idiosyncratic line into a web of fuzz. Then an abrupt edit, like stepping into a liftshaft, a passage in which an electronic drone ebbs and swells beneath a sombre cornet line. A time tunnel opens up, and a percussion section is faded in, sounding like a detoured version of the opening moments of The Herbie Hancock Sextets' "Sleeping Giant". Stray electro-bleeps float through the rhythmic thickets. Fade out.

*Utsonian, Automatic* is Isotope 217°'s second album, following 1997's *The Unsuitable Molecule*. If the brainy, nocturnal mood music of George Russell's 1961 *Ezz-thetics* LP seemed a reasonable lodestone for some of the music on that first album, *Utsonian, Automatic* is more diffuse, less locked to a compositional grid, in fact, certain sections make me think of another George Russell project, 1969's *Electronic Sonata For Souls Loved By Nature*, which cut George's patented brand of stranshunk-for-mathematics with electronic processing and tape interludes.

The time-honoured approach of slicing 'n' doing real-time improvisations in the editing suite has been applied to both these releases. *Utsonian, Automatic* was mixed down from studio jams by Bundy K Brown and John McEntire. The 20 minute, two track *Aesthetics EP* contains live performances recorded at Chicago's Rambo club rebotted in the hard discs of Mike Kaniel (Commander Mindfuck) and Casey Rice (Designer). It might not blow your head (and that's not a criticism, necessarily), but this is vivid, living, open-ended music, etched by a group whose collective weight and experience adds depth to the seductive textures, surfaces and tone-colours. Chicago still sounds like quite a town.

TOMMY HERRINGTON

## Uri Caine & Tin Pan Alley

The Sidewalks Of New York  
WARNER & WINSTON W 002002 CD

A fantasia about New York which actually sounds like the city — but not The New York of today or yesterday. It's a dream about the place as it might have been 90 or so years ago. Vaudeville theatres, Coney Island and bobes sidewalk hucksters, lonely immigrants, street musicians and carnival barkers drift in and out of each other. As in any proper dream, you don't quite catch them, and nothing is quite idiomatically right: the timeframe keeps shifting between the turn of the century and a decade or two later, the place switches from the heart of the city to the beach, it's hot or it's raining. It's ancient and modern at once.

How could it be a genuine recreation of those times? It's too long ago, and Uri Caine and his musicians are several worlds away by now. As ever, Caine is working with the cream

of New York's current misadventures — Gillie, Douglas, Ralph Alessi, Don Byron, Mark Feldman and many more — and they couldnt approximate the method and manners of James Reese Europe and Eubie Blake without seeming like smart alecks.

Instead, the repeated ease is rendered as timeless, the leger of the arrangements honoured by the gentle art of the playing. The singers admittedly have a tougher time of it. Nancy Opel sounds too modern and sings on "Everybody's Doin' It" and "His Anybody Here Seen Kinky?" and what would Florence Foster have said to that? And the self-elegance of George M. Cohan, Bert Williams and Nora Bayes is very difficult for any contemporary performer to realise. Somehow though, in this strange blending of ragtime cakewalk and vaudeville hoofing and mugging Caine has structured and delivered the revivalist record to beat them all.

Label boss Stefan Winter couldnt resist his

visual bit of quirkiness by putting in Uri's rehearsal of "Some Of These Days" as well as the finished version (but never mind. That sweet, startling and endearing, this parable about New York's gold-dusty past has masterpiece letters all over it.

RICHARD COOK

## Eugene Chadbourne & Henry Kaiser

The Chastise Lesson  
VICTOR 064 CD

## Fred Frith & Henry Kaiser

Friends And Enemies  
COLUMBIA TRISTE 11111 CD 2002

The Guitar Lesson is Chadbourne and Kaiser's tribute to Derek Bailey. Most of its 70 minutes plus duration is taken up with improvisation balanced on the knife-edge of experimental

playing, somehow embracing equal parts inspiration and tedium. From the skeletal beginnings of "Kotoko Lumbajayak", where Chadbourne and Kaiser mirror one another's every move, to the final, extended vocal and musical conversation of "Letter To Derek", this uncompromising set leaves only the bare bones of musical topology as a guide. Much of the sound coaxed out of the guitars is hard, flat and physical — negating claims of atonality, the sipping of a redwood, the mark of strings when plucked or hit. As ever, the music is as much about process as the results, with each moment or series of moments containing a dissection of the collaborative process. The sole composed piece by Chadbourne isn't that distinguishable from the improvised material the guitars follow and lead one another through a series of differing textures, just as they do elsewhere. The closing tracks recorded conversation for voice and guitar is either a witty juxtaposition or a long, tedious joke

depending on your sense of humor.

Kasner's various collaborations with Fred Frith are exhaustively documented on *Fred Frith And Ensembles*, a double set comprising their albums *With Fred's Like These* and *Who Needs Ensembles*, plus some unreleased live recordings from 1984 and more recent material from January this year. The early work from 1979, a sparse and angular full of desiccated noise, only bearing guitar and shimmering wind. The second album originally released in 1983 introduces some basic drum programming, but the electronics somewhat ominously forge a link with drum n' bass. Which is maybe responsible for the smoother flow of the compositions. Burnt ribs boomed off lock-lock rhythms clear space for melody and other traditional notions. The live recordings from a year later take it in the same direction, though the sometimes overwelling electronic percussion makes you wonder whether Frith and Kasner have just got a new toy and can't leave it alone.

Finally, on the 1999 studio material the duo returns to the lower and less conventionally musical practices of their earlier collaboration, though each of the four sections represents different ears. They are arranged across the two discs as two parallel chronologies, thereby imposing a symmetrical order on 20 years of their sometimes utterly shared history.

TON HOGUE

## Cibo Matto

*Strobe B7 R Type A*

WARNER BROS. 92473452 CD

## Pizzicato Five

*International Playboy & Playgirl*

MAECOS 001317 CD

From the delightful miniature fairland of Victorian jewelers to the lushness and inevitable economic saturation of the 70s to the kitsch and wacky techno-paradise of today, the mainstream Western media has never allowed reality to stand in the way of its portrayals of Japan. With a smorgasbord of food references on their first album, *Yoku Wa Wakaru*, Cibo Matto's *Food Cycle*, *Yoku Wa Wakaru*, apparently seemed intent on throwing themselves into the Sukejake algorithm too thick was a pity, as the true intent of the New York residents, Yuka Honda and Fiko Hatten lay in an anything-goes experimental pop sensibility that owed more to the Lower East Side crosscultural avant-garde than anything Tokyo's king of Techno-pop, Teetsuya Komuro could have cooked up. *Blutrot Strobe B7 R Type A*, their second full album, the gourmandising has been jettisoned (apart from the sparkling top homage to a smoothie life "So's Working") in favour of a smoothly blended musical stew. Sean Lennon is now in the group, and a host of guests including Peter Dinklage and David Douglas add extra spice, but it's Honda's consistently inventive melodies, structures and arrangements that really dazzle. It's an almost perfect pop record at

the more important for proving that globalisation needn't mean empty platitudes and overly glossed beats. Well tasty.

Pizzicato Five's talent on the other hand is sure to food nothing but the cultural metaphorisation that already envelops them. While their perfectly formulated sense of swirling London G6K style albeit all sung in Japanese and seasoned with a scattering of breakfasts, doubtless seems deliciously ironic to the Easy Listening lounge hordes, the Five really believe the myth. Their music is the recreation of a mythical age of hipness, forget soundtracks for the mind or musical evocations of place, this is the sound of an imaginary place and time, but for all the album's Big Boat groove and colourful horn stabs it is never really anything more than a perfectly observed pastiche. Still, though inspiration drains away as the record continues, the abrupt transitions and cranky synth parts of "Roll Royce" manage the best trick of sounding at once carefree and ominous.

ALAN CAMPBELL

## Warn Deceiver

*I Want You To Live 100 Years*

CD, MELBODISC 1101 CD

"Technology to wipe out truth is now available," wrote Bob Dylan in the liner notes to *World Gone Wrong*, his 1993 album of folk-blues covers. "Not everybody can afford it, but it's available. When the cost comes down, look out! There won't be songs like these anymore." Damn right. But soon they'll all sound like Warn Deceiver's new record. The latest album used to digital technology gives access the means to superimpose their work with the snap and crackle of old-time woe. So now anyone can noodle beneath haunted static and make like Robert Johnson at the Red of a switch. You can even regulate the speed of the gears — hit the 78 rpm setting for that authentic Delta techno. You can even alter the width of the virtual needle ploughing the grooves.

*I Want You To Live 100 Years*, the title makes overt, aware to manifest some anxiety denied by the technology just described. Deceiver led of 440's His Name Is Abuse and tongue in cheek grunge rockers like *Indian* looks his songs in scorching fire, a bit for the death and agony he presumes the fau-gingering process beacons on them. Or more kindly, he could be simply making a point about the relationship between auditory signifiers of historical distance and notions of authenticity. I doubt it, even if he let Lo Recordings wrap their decision to release 100 Years in such an exciting theory. Don't wait until you're dead. Glad that crackling aura of age and authority now while you're young enough to enjoy the benefits.

The venerable title of Warn Deceiver's "Sad Songs And Wishes" has accumulated so much studio magic it's almost painful to listen to. Thereafter, Deceiver doubles back on

himself over and over, as if unsure whether some of those glitches are actually disarming from the songs. The weaker material is fairly mired in static, but elsewhere Deceiver tiers in the electronic enhancements — so as not to detract from the listener's appreciation of his craft. No doubt, He never's worry. Most of these songs don't even make the most mediocre alt-country grade.

Disguising a straight singer-songwriter record with currently fashionable digital trics seems like an admission of the artist's own lack of conviction. It's pathetic, waiting pseudo-sophisticates bring shiny conceptual concepts like Deceiver's as a guilt-free licence to slip Country.

DAVID KEENAN

## Frank Denyer

*Finding Refuge In The Remains*

ELIOTRAVE 5.1231 CD

Frank Denyer once saw — or thinks he saw — a photograph of a doctor dancing at a diplomatic function. He writes, "The aura of the doctor, the aura of him giving this special sadness of those who had felt behind the merely human... The sadness of unyielding brutality has its own unique flavour." The striking image is captured by the bizarre piece "The Tender Sadness Of Tyrants As They Dance" (1991) for Japanese shakuhachi, bass flute and top-dancing shoes worn by the performers. Yoshitaku Iwamoto and Jon Zwienszauer produce out-of-time whoops not all of in the Fred Astaire tradition, while playing the two instruments absolutely in sync throughout the 15 minute piece. A palpable sense of strain is relieved by hesitant, plaintive passages.

This excellent recording nicely features compositions by Denyer from the last decade, performed by members of Barton Workshop. Born in London in 1943, he's best known as a formidable pianist specialising in contemporary repertoire. He has recorded pieces by Galina Ustvolskaya for instance — but as far as I know this is the first disc of his own compositions. Each is one of a kind. He was a friend of Morton Feldman's and it's possible to read some of Feldman's concern with sound and silence into his music. Another parallel is with Luciano Sola, in his music the other two "feel" but also its ecstatic humour. Like Harry Patch, Denyer creates his own instruments but they are mostly used for one piece and then discarded.

What's unique to Denyer is his superb ear for strange juxtapositions of sound, especially remarkable on the quartet for pipe, double doubling alto flute, double bass, cymbal and steel pens. The instant knocking sounds seem like an attempt to call the hovering instruments to order. A theatrical dimension is often apparent. The title track comes across as a musical theatre of the absurd for some musicians including a female vocalist. Here, as in a work called *Anthology*, the recurring

image is of new life emerging from a morass of dead matter.

Archaeology was inspired by an archaeological investigation Denyer witnessed in Nairobi where huge mounds of rubble with nothing apparently worth preserving were sorted through to reveal human remains fossils, pottery and other artefacts. A feeling of fragmentation or disorientation is pervasive. There's a rarely any momentum to the music here as elsewhere, and rapid passages seem feeble. And though connections can be made with each piece seems utterly, evocative. Denyer is a composer of uncompromising originality, a major figure, but an unmarketable one by the classical music industry.

ANDY HARTLEY

## Dumitrescu/Avram/ Cunitir/Hodgkinson

*Musique Acton 98*

RECOMMENDED RECORDS REP DUAH CD

Romanian composers are now appearing thick on the ground. Impressive releases from Săraia Neacșu, the Paris-based duo of Radulescu, Diana Rotaru and Valeria Dumitrescu have all appeared since the fall of Ceausescu. Here, Lucu Dumitrescu and Ana Maria Avram join forces with Chris Cunitir and Tim Hodgkinson, both ex-Henry Cow, in a challenging set of recordings from the 1998 Nancy-Vandœuvre Musique Acton Festival. Unfortunately, the release is then on biographical details of the two Romanians, so it's strange to the gritty gritty of the music. Dumitrescu's "New Masters And Pupils" for electronic and percussion was inspired by a "metron" impact, a big one, evidently for this is a vast cosmic soundtrack. Chris Cunitir's percussion sounds are processed through live electronics. Industrial noise, notably sounds of shattering glass, is dominant, though the resulting disc still always comes.

Ana Maria Avram recently composed a quartet for Kronos, and followed it up with "Nouvelle Ane" performed here by the strings of Romanians Hyper Ensemble, who also work with Dumitrescu. It's an uncompromising piece with a tendency to nose through, drawing buzzards of pizzicato high-pitched sounds and ticks of glassbells from the purity of avant-garde string effects. The score of Chris Cunitir's "Tune On Earth" consists of a series of cards and 49 candles, evidently a chance operation, though we're not told how the chances are taken. Occasionally, a hauntingly dissonant violin solo emerges from the cacophony of strings, prepared piano, cymbals and thunderous percussion.

The title of Tim Hodgkinson's "Black Death And Errors In Construction" is a capsule description of the reasons why Săraia's vast Cathedral was never completed. Episodes of independent activity are broken by quiet passages and sudden outbursts. It makes for a vivid conclusion to an impressive album.

ANDY HARTLEY



Dave Douglas

## Dave Douglas Tiny Bell Trio

Songs For Wandering Souls

WINTER & WINTER 910342 CD

*Songs For Wandering Souls* alludes to troubled spirits, the restless dead still looking for their last home. These songs are filled with an epic, aching sadness. Along the banks of the Rhine they call it *Welschmerz*; in Mississippi they call it the blues. The album's parameters are fixed by a reading of Robert Schumann's "Nicht So Schnell, Mit Viel Ton Zu Spielen," from his pianocello cycle *Ruf! Stöße Im Volkston*, at one end, and Dave Douglas's own title track at the other. The music in between is indirectly marked by the wandering souls whose work means most to Douglas. There is trumpeter Booker Little, dead at the age of 23 in 1961, whose sharp, ringing tone and weird elastic phrasing informs Douglas's most lyrical work. There is also the late Roland Kirk, whom Douglas addresses directly with a version of "Breath-A-Thon," from Kirk's *Natural Black Inventions: Root Songs*, which the trumpeter praises as "an incredible document of human creativity, ingenuity and will."

A remarkably mobile player, Douglas is as much at home with the blues as he is with the work of American jazz composers such as Ellington and Monk. His more contemporary accomplishments include time served with John Zorn's *Masada*, Anthony Braxton and Myra Melford

However, The Tiny Bell Trio featured here is his Euro-oriented "pocket Balkan" outfit featuring drummer Jim Black and guitarist Brad Shepik, who just as readily dip into Schumann's bucket of sorrows. Coming to *Ruf! Stöße Im Volkston* via Pablo Casals and Leopold Manner's 1952 recording, Tiny Bell sum in a loose-limbed take of "Nicht So Schnell, Mit Viel Ton Zu Spielen," with Black's fantastic percussion bouncing and flapping while Brad Shepik's guitar matches Douglas's melancholic carlincheads.

Though *Wandering Souls* is dominated by Douglas's lonely, last-man-standing bubble sound, both Shepik and Black's roles in Tiny Bell are absolutely essential. The level of interaction within the trio is uncanny, and live especially, the way they anticipate each other's moves seems to prove the existence of extra-sensory activity. Shepik and Black also work together in Chris Speed's *Pachora*. In that group, as well as playing guitar, Shepik also plays various Middle Eastern stringed instruments such as tambura and electric sa. His buzzy guitar tone is sometimes akin to the "Moroccan blues" of Loren Mazzacane Connors, while at other points he lays down delicate tonal blankets for Black and Douglas's hovering presences. Black's invigorating drumming is possessed. As a member of saxophonist Tim Berne's Bloodcount quintet he never really got the opportunity to strike out, but in this context he is boundless, beating out multiple groins, playing with his bare hands and howling on children's toys, often within the space of a single track. In all, a formidable trio.

On the opening "Sam Hill," they take a twisted Ornette-like melody and parp it full of swaggered bravado with Shepik's sloppy guitar lines, almost pushing Black's drums over the edge. "At Dusk" and the title track are classic. "Moody Doves" he floats ascending note chains that recall Miles Davis's most heartbroken poetry. The album concludes with the cave-in of "Ferrous." Black raves round its circling rhythms at breakneck speed, Shepik bounces dirty chords back and forth into the riff that launches Douglas through hoops. At such musical peaks, with all three players effortlessly entwined, a fourth element emerges, perhaps giving voice to one of the album's wandering souls. What it is saying is what they are playing. You only have to listen.

DAVID KEENAN

equivalent of Gregorian chant, the *Salamya* choir was established in Tunis in 1958. These hymns from the numerous Sufi brotherhoods in Tunisia form an integral part of the teaching given to disciples, as well as contributing to the mystic Sufi tradition of song and dance. The choir has several fine solo voices among its ten members, which are helped along by percussion on a number of these sober but uplifting hymns.

CLIVE BELL

## Fluxion

Vibrant Forms

CHAIN REACTION CROCD CD

Since 1995, Chain Reaction has been mapping out the strangely shifting terrain that exists between Detroit and the label's offices in the Kew-Forest district of Berlin. This results often exceed all notions of categorization and are never less than intriguing. Written and produced by Chain Reaction newscaster K. Soule, *Vibrant Forms* is the latest communique from these more distant hinterlands of the Techno diaspora. An aptly named mix of muted pulses, minimalist electroacoustics and floating dub effects *Vibrant Forms* offers the listener another deep dive in space to engage with.

The sonic equivalent of graph paper, in which each carefully measured gap and line is arranged to suggest only the possible contours of a composition, Fluxion's music unfolds itself around the ambiguous rhythmic interplay between sound and silence. Even the selection of titles, including "Halo," "Largo" and "Lapses" indicates a preoccupation with the pause that occurs directly after each beat, and before the next one falls. A low key sense of time suspended and stretched forward motion pervades each piece. As events repeat themselves in tranquil sequences, scale and measurement gradually lose all meaning and dimension. "Atlas" is a series of recurring encounters, alternating between drifting electronic loops and clipped House stings. The finest track is "Influx." However, another title that suggests some well yet uncomplicated rhythm. An advancing soundwave is slowly transformed into a pulsating wall of windswept Pacific surf. This stark, extended moment is as perfect as it is powerful.

REN HOLLINGS

## Godflesh

Use Apri! Thems

EMERGENCY! CD

The far horizon is streaked with flames. The air ripples under suffocating waves of heat. To the north the sky is filled with hovering gunships, gleaming UFOs, and thick columns of smoke. So Godflesh are back with a brand new album and about time too.

Hellbent upon taking their sonic immersion to the limit, Justin Broadrick and GC Green have

## Ensemble Al-Tanburah

The Sennariyya Of Port Said

EMERGENCY! CD

## Ali El Khencheli

Songs From The Aures

EMERGENCY! CD

## La Sulamiyya

Sufi Songs From Tunis

EMERGENCY! CD

These three albums from an ongoing Arab music series are attractively presented digipaks carefully produced in France, with notes in English and French. Ensemble Al-Tanburah are an Egyptian folk group but

little of a rambunctious dance party collective than stylized concert recitalists. Similar in spirit to the Romanian wedding band, Taraf De Haïdouks, they take turns leading the singing, tossing a frame drum to each other across the stage or performing comic dance routines rich with references to bellydance and tango music. This is contagious dance music played by lutes (sennariyya) and percussion, reviving the popular urban styles heard in the bars and cruise ships of the Suez Canal region. Prayers and love songs alternate, but always, as the sleeve notes have it, "the mandatory optimism prevails."

The Algerian desert music on Ali El Khencheli's album offers a worthwhile through time, which affords a glimpse into a deep

North African tradition. This is up in music, a series, the singer himself was born in 1914, and made his first recordings of Algerian popular song in 1928. But these unadorned arrangements, in which the singer and his tender frame drum are propelled by two highly rhythmic flute players, take you into a timeless trance world shared by the Moroccan Gnawa and Jaoukwa traditions. The singing is in a very male style, high-pitched and austere, shorn of the extravagance of urban music. The extraordinary tones use breath-heavy tones as such as a goat's bleat; together they constitute an unambiguous, dark driving the rhythm through melodic cycles, each line laying bare the same harshness of the desert. Performing something like an Islamic

shaped the bits of thrash Metal and brittle punking drums down to basics and then given the whole thing a tune-up. The strutting rhythms and seething excesses of earlier workouts such as "Spine" and "Hofma" from their 1992 album *Pump* have now mutated into the bonecrunching low-end ruck of "Whore Trut Is Your Truth?" and "Telled." Savage breakbeats surge and roar menacingly beneath the heavily amplified diaphanous and restless guitar riffs of "I'm Fine." Elsewhere, the dirty, bass-heavy riling on "Bastards" and the Ho!ho! detonations of "Desecr" bolster distorted vocal performances that often tremble on the edge of frailty and incoherence.

Godflesh's music has always sounded as if it inhabited a world in perpetual danger of collapsing in on itself. By implication, their notion of Armageddon was destined to be a bleakly claustrophobic and smoke-blackened affair. Out of the masterful, combative collection of rants, songs and beats on *Us And Them*, Godflesh has conjured up a minor apocalypse. Not a moment too soon.

## KEW HOLDINGS

## Jerry Granelli & Badlands

Enter, A Dragon  
SONGAINS 3611521 CD

If quality was the only criterion, Jerry Granelli's small, select output would have earned him a place among the leading contemporary jazz players. But he's mostly lived and worked away from the main centres of the music: Boulder, Colorado, Seattle, Halifax, Nova Scotia. The 59-year-old drummer has credits with Bill Frisell, Mose Allison, Ornette Coleman, Joe Henderson and many others. His previous recording for Songlines, *Broken Circle*, garnered praise, but this new album is both more varied and ambitious.

"Bodlands: the name comes from a place, a raw and enigmatic landscape, unpredictable. The music is based on the feeling of space and spontaneity," writes Granelli of his group of young New York musicians. It's also the title of Terrence Malick's debut film, where a young Martin Sheen and Sissy Spacek go on a desultory killing spree. Fortunately, all the group members survive to the end of this session. They make up a septet: the saxophones of Chris Speed, Peter Epstein and Biggeron Kuros; trombones Curtis Hesselberg, Daniel James Salt and the leader, sax bassist

Companions have been made with master drummer Shai Mojan for subtlety and sensitivity, but Mojan hasn't attempted anything as ambitious as Grenelli's compositions. The longer pieces are separated by short but enchanting "humus" duos for drums plus soloist, each taken in turn. As a rule, the album's keynote is understatement. On "Bou Nour" composed by Grenelli Jr., Jame Sali warbles to a lively spectral accordion in an early atmospheric piece, even the funny "String Thing" slowly fades away before it dies a death.

ANDY HAMILTON

**Gunter Hampel**  
**'Heartplants' Quintet**

legendary  
paw 045 (1)

Gunter Hampel &  
Christian WeidnerSolid Film  
978H-044-00

The great motto of the art of improvisation," proclaims the sleeve note to *Legendary* – and Gunter Hampel's commitment to the art in all its forms is clear on these latest live recordings from his own Barthel Band. The multi-instrumentalist, born in 1937, has long been a key figure in European free jazz. He was a pioneer with the first incarnation of the "Heimtatsmen" Quartet of 1954-66. The second edition, captured live in 1997 on *Legendary*, features the same members, aside from Arjen Groot on bass, who replaces the late Buschi Nieboerg!

A photo of the original line-up shows five jazz being played by men in tuxedos. More than 30 years later, they might be more casually dressed, but they have lost nothing in terms of rigour, power and invention. Trumpeter Manfred Schoof is an immensely strong soloist, while Alexander von Schlippenbach's jostic fusillades continue to astonish. Hampel on vibes is a piece of the group.

The album consists of two long tracks, preloved by a short but eventful solo piece by the leader on flute. "Speisplatz" begins freely before settling into a loose, swinging groove. Schlippenbach slips through a solo in and out of time. While Schoof sends furies of notes into the stratosphere on his entrance, his tone is warm and plangent. "All The Things You Could Be, If Charles Mingus Was Your Daddy" is a much more episodic suite of moods. The free opening in a seamy rhythm turns slow and lyrical with Manfred Schoof's solo, an unaccompanied interlude by Hampel on bass clarinet and ares a tongue-like section.

The duo album *Solid Flow* represents a more conservative aspect of Hampel's output, though a sense of swing is never far from his concerns. A recording of their first concert encounter, here Hampel plays bass clarinet and vibraphone, with Christian Wiedner on alto and tenor sax. "More Power To You" is a bebop-style blues, but "Guch" is much freer, with the vibist's tremulousness evident.

In his hut in Germany Hampel has been recognised with academic honours, guest professorships, a collaboration with leading composer Hans Werner Henze, 60th birthday celebrations in Cologne and Göttingen. But, elsewhere his pictures less clear. The usual neglect of European jazz aside, it probably hasn't helped that almost all of Hampel's music has been released through his own relatively hard-to-get Birth label, where the improved aesthetic extends to all aspects of production. The sound isn't exactly hi-fi, the homemade layout and design features smudgy photos and choosy videoworks, with awful English translations – 'I love it, they

**TOWER**  
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GROOVE COLLECTIVE  
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Groove Collective pioneered the wild jazz scene in the U.S. 'Deconstructed' became its delectable link side, recreating the relentless groove of their live performances.



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# Ali Farka Touré

Niafunké

WORLD CIRCUS WCD95 CD

# Afol Bocum

Alibab

WORLD CIRCUS WCD95 CD

Niafunké is a small town in Mali, not far from Timbuktu, on the edge of the Sahara desert. Its rural economy has for centuries been barely sustained by the waters of the Niger. In recent years Ali Farka Touré has been preoccupied with finding effective ways to irrigate the land he farms. His innovations have involved him in conflict with people who resist such change. Afol Bocum, a longtime friend, has faced the same challenges, working professionally as an agricultural adviser to the area. The pressing problem of growing rice has kept both men at home, and the international audience for their music, cultivated during the 1980s, has been deprived of recordings for the past five years. Producer Nick Gold and engineer Jerry Boys travelled to Niafunké, with cable and generator, determined to record.

On the cover of his new album, Touré, who has brought water pumps and tractors to the banks of the Niger, clutches his electric guitar. He is seated beside a Roland amplifier, which stands against a weathered wall of the dilapidated arched building serving as a makeshift studio. Touré's music initially caused excitement in Europe and America on account of its evident similarity to work by John Lee Hooker and his Mississippi antecedents. The blues strand is still much in evidence and deeply satisfying, but Touré at home seems more than ever in touch with Mali's indigenous music tradition, the richness of which has few parallels anywhere in the world. The keening of the one-stringed ngala fiddle, featured on several tracks and played by Touré himself on "Jangali Famatou", is a sound that seems to odescape time. Touré learnt to play it before he mastered guitar, but its inclusion cautions against regarding him as merely an African adjunct to American blues. He emphasises: "My music is about where I come from and our way of life and it is full of important messages for Africans." Some Western listeners may value it as entertainment, but



he hopes others will recognise that it is a manifestation of an ancient culture negotiating the terms of its survival in the contemporary world.

To classify Touré as either an agent of change or a conservator of tradition is equally reductive. Listen to his interaction with the vocal chorus on "Allah Uya" and hear music making conceived in relation to the lived realities of community. Listen to "Ali's Here", urgent affirmation that the musician's gains are being shared with neighbours through the farmer's labours, and hear music acknowledged as a vital resource for communication.

Afol Bocum has been a member of Touré's group for three decades, but this record with his own group Alibab is his debut as leader. Bocum contributes to two tracks on *Niafunké*, and that arrangement is reciprocated through Touré's two appearances on *Alibab*. More generally, the mark of Bocum's mentor is readily discernible, not least in his fluent guitar work. Like Touré, but unplugged, he skilfully weaves variations that radiate out from a melodic core to which he returns effortlessly and with hypnotic insistence. His vocal style also bears clear similarities, although it is less seasoned and emphatic, more nasal. The blues nigra is still present at times, but the acoustic ensemble, whose name translates as "messenger of The Great River", needs no extraneous reference to enhance its enlivening warmth.

JULIAN COWLEY

resurrects the astonishing verbal mingles Stanley Usher (famously heard on Small Faces' *Oxygen's Not Gone* failed). Here he becomes Basil's answer to Sun Ra: his utopian formulae "Sostenu? We're off to Pluto!" — suggest that the word, punning humour of the Bush Street Kids and Little Plum could direct space research programmes. *Beautifol!*

REN WATSON

## in between noise

Lazarp (Web/Without The Skin)

INTERIOR SOUNDS MP3A 37CD

## in between noise

Choir (A Subscape Of Resonance)

INTERIOR SOUNDS MP3A 37CD

## Steve Roden

View

VIEW/74 GALEN 37CD 37CD

in between noise is one non de plume of Californian visual artist Steve Roden who recently collaborated with id battery's Brandon LaBelle for an album on Japan's Meme label. These two beautifully packaged 3 CDs document Roden's interactions with various forms of modernist furniture. That's not necessarily as domestic as it sounds when the Choir in question is a steel "diamond" special designed in the 1950s by the late US Sonambient artist and sculptor Harry Bertola, whom Roden quotes in the sleeve notes: "I don't think the visual aspect determines solely what it's going to look like it's the sound as well." Bertola said: "If the sound comes out, a good or different sound the visual seems to confirm it." Visually, the warped wobble of Bertola's steel chair brings to mind the flimsy vibration of Bridget Riley's Op Art paintings, and ironically they're every bit as confusing and surreal.

His artful designs suggest that Bertola had severely encoded music in his creations and they were slowly waiting for someone to take in the right combination to free their differing voices. When Roden bows the chair, he releases a grimy, rising and falling choral sound, while finger-drumming the surfaces simulates the pitter-patter of rain. On "Circle" he sends up hazy slow-spinning tones topped with ringing, high pitched moose bleats to hypnotic effect.

Lamp sources all its sounds from a bubble lamp constructed after George Nelson's design. Zen-like in its functional simplicity, the lamp is constructed from a spindle-washed over a spherical frame. Applying the same 'playing' techniques as before in the lamp produces a much more physical sound consisting of small, solid gong strikes and speedy electronic rattles.

View, issued under Roden's own name, was originally presented as a sound installation in a San Francisco gallery. Recorded over several days in April, the audio-view is a question was from an open and closed gallery

leave you with an impression of a musician not exactly aware to self-promotion yet spilling over with ideas, some crazy but all interesting. A complete original

ANDY HAYTON

## László Hortobágyi

Songs From Hungaroban

ARCA 22114 CD

## Suns Of Arqa

Meet The Gayan Uteyak Orchestra

ARCA 22113 CD

László Hortobágyi recreates the traditional music of East Hungary with his computer. He

gives off his samples a glossy virtual ambience that recalls Dolby B Sansurround rather than the Plagiar steps. He Arabic singers have superb voices, but when a qawwal is performed over the bass drone Vangelis invented for *Black Runner*, it doesn't feel quite right. Made to render baroque melodies, the unperformed needs sound like sackbuts, over-emphatic use of ultrasonic music school devices brings on bad memories of Genesis' *Nawa-Horipia* (Shay Ad-Chorral) ought to be a semantic Techno blow-out, but doesn't approach the heights of Khaleel's "Le Jour Vient". Hortobágyi's use of ethnic samples is closer to the spray-on sublime of car ad soundtracks than seizure of First World beats by the oppressed.

Over the decades, Manichaeism's *Sufiya* Arqa have shown they can accommodate practically any style in their roomy disc and Hortobágyi's Gayan Uteyak Orchestra is no exception. This Hungarian eclecticism isn't fleshed-out but focused and amplified weirdly like sarcasm weaponry against white trend homogeneity. Wadaya's bass drops in and moves the lower gut. During extended instrumental, flow and vein-drope like vapour trails in a hazy sky, bass, stable and ghauman reply like muscles flexing off surreal nostalgia. "Aperçu (Himnari)" is a fatalistic cavalcade of cowbells and desert wind effects worthy of Morricone, real-time impressing pummeling the excruciatingness of their sound into conviction. "Sostenuo"

wind, through which viewers would get, while wearing a set of headphones. Noting how a real-time audio snapshot from the installation wouldn't automatically pack a CD with enough incident to make it worth hearing, Roden has looped and treated specific sections to create a home listening approximation of the concert, rather than a strictly accurate document. In this version the noise of car engines ticking over are foregrounded against the distant rumbling of receding commuter traffic. With the volume level pitched low, the turn is transformed into a mesmerizing midjet symphony with the trance potential to take you deep into city streets you never knew existed.

DAVID KIRWAN

## Jon Lloyd

*Four Aloud*  
HAROLD 537 CD

On alto as well as soprano saxophonist Jon Lloyd has an acidic tone which lends itself to cerebral cleverness. But it is short on visceral warmth. Hence his ensemble work always features an important part for a strong bass voice. On early recordings, such as *Joyboy* (1990) and *Head* (1993), Phil Rogers held up the bass end tremendously well, and now Marco Mattos provides a comparably rich, if less overtly propulsive underpinning. Lloyd etches his angular themes across the body of a group that is rounded out further by the cello of Stan Adler. The interaction between the two string players nourishes the saxophonist's spiky formulations. On the charged opener "Jump" and the relatively earthy "Blues For..." Lloyd's sizzling very noticeably gains strength as it feeds from their support. He is a remarkable saxophonist, but his judgment in choosing suitable collaborators seems as vital to his artistic success as his own considerable technical capabilities.

This quartet is comprised by Paul Curvis, a percussionist who is singularly capable of finding mental agility with physical urgency. He is an accomplished classical musician who has worked with The London Sinfonietta as well as a forceful jazz drummer. His busy melodic tinkering on the title track is a perfectly judged response to that composition's systematic repetitions and South-East Asian echoes. It has the detachment of a commentary, yet at the same time it belongs to the character of the piece. For illustration of his capacity to drive an ensemble back no further than the opening bars of "Jump."

*Four And Five* ends with an interpretation of Duke Ellington's "Take The Colours." If Lloyd appears to be acknowledging a debt to the jazz mainstream, he's actually leading his group through an anatomisation of the theme's potential, opening it up. Lloyd doggedly avoids being ensnared by the obvious, be it in terms of rhythmic pulse, melodic line or harmonic structure. On this album he has found musicians who share his determination

## Gary Lucas

*Q3 Paradise*  
OXFORD MUSIC WORKS OXWICH 1 CD

Recorded live at the Paradise, a crumbling church hall in central Amsterdam that has probably witnessed more sonic mayhem than just about any other structure still standing in Northern Europe, this four track release may seem a tad short at a little over 20 minutes playing time. What a lack in length, however, it makes up for in exuberance. Two decades on from his time as a Captain Beefheart sideman, Lucas still manages to make his guitar sound fresh, inventive and fun. On "Rise Up To Be" the only self-written selection here, he sends splintered tone clusters, fractured chords and atavistic midwest spinning off into the stratosphere while his treatment of Abdullah Ibrahim's "Big Joe From Kalamazoo" puts its controls set firmly for the more farflung planes of the solar system. This is a gritty surf music specifically designed to function in deep space. Lucas even manages to make Krautwerk's rock-hugging dance, "Autobahn" sound as if its tyres have barely touched asphalt. It is not that surprising, therefore, to discover that he chooses to close his set with an instrumental version of The Songstress On The Edge Of Heaven's, an evanescent Chinese pop ballad taken from a 1937 hit movie *The Angel On The Street*. "Great title, huh?" Lucas muses shyly. "I'd like to see that." And once he starts playing, you'll wish you were his size.

KEW HOLLINGS

## Loren MazzaCane Connors

*St Vincent's Newsworld Home*  
FHM RECORDINGS 99W010 CD

**Langille/Burnes/Daniell/  
MazzaCane Connors**  
*Let The Darkness Fall*  
SECRETLY CANADIAN SCS2 CD

In Loren MazzaCane Connors' world, it is always raining on his house and none of the others, and it doesn't let up on those two albums. After a couple of decades of toiling in the obscurity of self-released records, the floodgates slowly began to creek open in the 90s, and recordings by Connors started to seep out on a host of small labels in the US, Europe and Japan. The level of releases has surely exceeded saturation level by now, and even his enthusiasts must have begun to feel a sense of ennui.

Since moving away from his acoustic, intensely abstract, Country blues beginnings, over the past few years Connors has applied his unique, meditative style of electric guitar to explorations of his home city, New York, and to aspects of his Irish-American heritage. *St Vincent's Newsworld Home* is a suite of 15 short pieces dedicated to the orphanage founded in the early 20th

century by a Roman Catholic priest. Connors's playing is as immediately identifiable and as abstract as ever, with its long sustain providing a melting, shifting base for the piercing, solitary and long-bent notes. While the resulting music is never less than moving, and the melancholy beautifully undercuts his occasional romantic tendency, it is difficult to pin down its precise relationship to the disc's carefully spelled out historical background.

From the striking, dark cover painting by Albert Pinkham Ryder to the desolate, low key haze of the music, *Let The Darkness Fall* is undoubtedly a Loren MazzaCane Connors record. Here, however, some fifti-fifti light is provided by the whispered vocals of his longtime collaborator and partner, Suzanne Langille. Her previous appearances on Connors's records had been all too brief, but here (as on her previous, Society Canadian release, *The Enchanted Forest*) she is given more room to flesh out her spectral moans and shadowed phrasing. She has one of those voices that will see you gently through the longest of nights. The sparse, all-guitar backing is provided by Connors along with Andrew Burnes and David Daniell of the *Melting Point* San Agustin. So closely do they run and blend, echo Connors, that on occasion they seem to be no more than ghosts lost in his tangled effects, veils.

ALAN CURTIS

## Oscura Luminosa

*In Full Armour*  
LINT LINT 1017 CD

## Barry Guy/Robert Dick/ Randy Raine-Reusch

*Guidara*  
NASCORE COTTE 111 CD

The baroque-free improvisation group Oscura Luminosa was formed by flautist Robert Dick when he arrived in Switzerland from New York in the early 1990s. Their seemingly schizophranic musical identity comes over most strongly in the improvisation-rich version of Monteverdi's dismissed madrigal *Il Combattimento Di Tancredi E Clorinda*, that dominates *In Full Armour*. This is clearly a very free rendition that moves between fluid written passages and intense improvisations that never lose sight of their rotated, leaping. Despite the high drama of the story, the group works with an uncrowded spacious ease. The instrumentation (flutes, harpachord, voice, musical saw, recorder, cello) permits a fierce exploitation of texture, the listener is made conscious of wood, metal, brass... the materiality of the music. Besides the Monteverdi madrigal, there are four compact, freely improvised pieces described by Dick's sleeve note as "the soul of this CD." Each one is clearly argued and imbued with a very different background vocabulary to that of much improv. Unfortunately, the album falls off into bathos



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Coil: sweet dreams

## Coil

**Musick To Play In The Dark Volume One**  
CHANCE GHAUL CD003 CD

For those nervous souls whose hearts skip a beat when things go bump in the night, bedding down in the dark with Coil music is a mortifying prospect. But holding enchantment as well as terror, the night is as much the domain of sexual play, recuperation and regeneration as it is the domain of death and decay. Born under Maldoror's black sun, Coil have always widdly hymned the night, even undergoing prolonged bouts of sleep deprivation to attain the extra-sensitized state between waking and dreaming, that is most conducive to exploring its darkest hours. There can be few guides better qualified to negotiate its shadows, key into its moods and unlock its very special pleasures.

*Musick To Play In The Dark* is the fourth 'official' Coil CD (although it is only available by mail order). It replaces *Backwords* (scheduled for Trent Reznor's Nothing label) as the follow-up to 1991's *Love's Secret Domain*. However, the interim has been filled with various completions, side projects and, most significantly, the recent cycle of four *Solstice* EPs. The spontaneity of those *Solstice* records, combined with the Coil duo of John Balance and Peter

Christopherson moving their HQ closer to Avalon, contributed to the propitious circumstances of these *Musick* sessions, for which Coil were joined by Drew McDowall and a new associate, one Trighspaulsandra. The speed and spontaneity of the recordings might have resulted in a leaner, more sparing production, but *Musick* is still hallmarked by the special care Coil take in minting new, idiosyncratic sounds. Working through sleep-deprived states, in which body and mind simultaneously register every slight, shuddering change caused by the mingling desks' variations in timbre, tone, colour and tempo, Coil have come up with a particularly unstable musical molecule as the base unit of *Musick*. The way these are strung together in those silvery ribbons gives the album its special, weirdly ecstatic feel.

The opening track, 'Are You Shivering', directly alludes to its unstable state — in their Website notes to *Musick*, Balance writes that the title was the question they used to ask each other on MDMA. The song heralds the night with the lowering toghorn blast that dispenses the blackened writer smog settled on a still

river. Once clear, Coil skid across its surface, slow patterns of beats drawn from a sharp intake of breath. The following 'Red Birds Will Fly Out Of The East And Destroy Paris In A Night' fully immerses you in *Musick*'s shimmering lunar sea of fizzes, synth burns, sprung spongeteats, moonlit piano and sleep-weary, mumbling vocals. As much for its texture as the texts it conveys, the warmth of Balance's voice accounts for much of the album's intimacy. On 'Red Queen', he warily intones warnings of media manipulation over a growling electronic choral effect and a trace of treated percussion, the whole framed with ripples of cocktail piano. On 'Broccoli', he voices over a rare Peter Christopherson vocal part, which acts as a medium for the departed's advice: 'And always say thank you! Especially for the Ivocool!' With its digitized Dekkaman ghost-moan and electric crackles illuminating the song's heartside scene, it is at once dream-like eerie and strangely comforting, an outstanding track. The crackle morphs into the buzzing ether that primes the transparent surrealist wishes of 'Strange Birds' ('I used to be terrified that a bird's wing would slice open my eye,' writes Balance, in the Website notes), and the closing, 'The Dreamer Is Still Asleep', Balance's voice and phased hum melody are counterpointed with a chill ambient synth that frosts over the track's breezy bluesbrooke jazz backing, eventually freeing all movement. A deep, pulsing bass slugs on alone for a few beats before the album abruptly cuts out and daylight kicks in.

BIRA KOPF

with the closing, misjudged reworking of Metallica's 'Upper Headcase'.

Guido treats Dick, with bossed Barry Guy, also a master of extended technique, and multi-instrumentalist Randy Raine-Reusch, undoubtedly the only musician in the world to have performed with both Aerosmith and Pauline Oliveros. Playing various zithers, wind and percussion instruments of Queerist origin, Raine-Reusch is vital to the peculiar palette of sounds the trio works with. His contributions often come in at a torrent, tossing angular clattering statements into the conversation. Guy is the usual restless resource of invention, reworking and transferring motifs, and continually shifting the music forward. Dick stacks the boundaries of flute sound, returning periodically to deliver howling, mournful lines. The combined bowing, scraping and noise-bending takes the music into a strange, limbo-ish territory, with all three musicians committed to making the interstices of the 12-tone scale. Their engrossing three-way conversations produce intense musical rhapsodies that threaten to engulf the listener. It's a bit of a shock at first, but once you've got your hair wet, your head quickly acclimates itself to its formidable yet rewarding demands.

WILL HONTGOPYER

## Pachora

UITS  
KNOTTING FACTORY RECORDS #F0203 CD

## Chris Speed

Devotions  
SONGSUNES NEL 154 CD

## Ben Perowsky Trio

Ben Perowsky Trio  
JAZZTECH MUSIC INC #JPM-068 CD

The common factor on these three albums is saxophonist and clarinet player Chris Speed. Since 1992 he has been an important figure on New York's downtown scene, working with musicians like Tim Berne, Dave Douglas, Hank Dreyer and his own collective Human Feet. His oblique, surprising lines take some unraveling, while his tenor's thick, brassy tone generates great sonorities. For some time he's been immersed in the gypsy music of Eastern Europe. With his band *Phosphor*, described as his 'World Jazz' outfit, he explores Mediterranean and Eastern music, especially from Greece and Turkey.

Apart from Speed, here on clarinet only, Pachora are Brad Shepik on tamboura, electric sax and banjar — all like-kiss instruments — with Sveinsson on bass and Jen Black on percussion. Aside from the

Islandic Sveinsson, they are all from Seattle. By the standards of these musicians, the settings are in some ways fairly conventional, with regular pulse — albeit with a corollary of nine- and 13-beat meters — and clearly etched themes.

Of the recent synthesis of jazz and Eastern folk music, following in the wake of John Coltrane's modal improvisations — among them Zorn's own *Phazenda* and Dave Douglas' *Tiny Bell Trio* — Pachora are the most thoroughgoing. Four tracks of 11m offer traditional material, while the originals are in related vein. Jim Black's slow 'Idono' is based on an intriguing off-kilter rhythm. It is beautifully plangent. The traditional 'Provençolo Syris' is lyrical and, for once, true to the bar.

Sveinsson and Black turn up with the impressive Velmam-born trumpeter Cuong Vu on Speed's own album *Devotions*. Vu studied at the New England Conservatory with Joe Mayer, but fortunately hasn't turned out dourly and microtonal. The line-up is the same as on *Iron No*, Speed's debut for Songsun — the Vancouver-based label whose astonishing high level output is expanding the boundaries of new jazz. Balkan rhythms are again pervasive. An exception is the bleakly Ambient 'Tulp', where Cuong Vu plays like Miles Davis. With Speed keeping the brakes on his clarinet, the atmosphere

become even more enervated, while Jim Black's double time drumming adds to the mystery. This is deep and sophisticated music.

The Ben Perowsky CD is more straightforward. The drummer's to here, with Speed plus Scott Colley on bass, recalls the venerable jazz line-up on Sonny Rollins' *The Village Vanguard*. The brooding songbook covers (Elton John and Pink Floyd's 'Money') is Oliver Messiaen. It's interesting to hear Speed on the kind of standard jazz material he usually avoids. Charlie Parker's 'Segment' shows how, unlike many improvisers, he follows the theme as well as the chord changes. Messiaen sound just too mundane and will be rotating a little in his groove at the arranged extract from *Quartet For The End Of Time*. The album was recorded live at the Knotting Factory, but sadly the vibrant playing disappears in an incoherent, dead acoustic. This life no deserves better.

ANDY HANFORD

## Felt

Empty Bell Ringing In The Sky  
WE #413 CD

Felt's existence is yet another knot in the eye for the hoary old notion that there ain't nothing new happening in modern music, outside of the

digital domain. Sure, there are antecedents for Patti's freestyle shapeshifting. Live Dead the original comic number of Amos Dell. Ya Ho Wa 13's exclusive heavy jams. COJPS Transmissions/Thrashing Grade. But much of the best music is made by people working on their awareness of what has gone before. Pett belongs to that relatively new wave of disillusioned musicians who've crawled through the cracks that Scott Young opened up in the late '80s to get back to the white-race source of freaked-out rock 'n' roll and ecstatic jazz.

Together with the likes of New York's No-Neck Blues Band, Scotland's Decar Pipe, Matthew Bower's Sunroof and Neil Campbell's Virginale Orchestra, the Virginale Petto create bold new music that hovers freely between Art Ensemble styled jazz, ritualistic ethnic drone and San silence. The haku-like title of their fifth album *Empty Bel Ringing In The Sky* suggests a sparse, meditative music content to go nowhere—in and then very slowly. On the opening piece, "Ghost: Are You Ever Forgotten?" the two leaders in a group meditate on the hum and click of Tibetan prayer bowls, despite the high-pitched howling going on down below. *Empty Bel Ringing In The Sky No. 2*, recorded live at the Terrastock II festival in San Francisco in 1998, is a tempest-tossed trance piece underpinned by an organ and coloured by various bowed ephemera. The newest piece, "Ghost Golems," appropriately points the way forward—the incessant bell toll aside the sound sources have been emptied of any identifiable tone or timbre, completing their transition from group-mind to no-mind.

DAVID KEIRHAN

## Peshay Miles From Home

BLUES CD, ZEPA

Peshay, aka Peshay, is a genuine drum 'n' bass originator responsible for some of the earliest releases on both Headheads and Good Looking. Derived from the picture for two years by illness in the mid-90s, he returned to recording this, his debut album, only for it to be caught up in the demise of his former label. His *Wax* had been released at the back end of '97 as intended; he released it after he'd been rightly hailed as a pioneer of the (then) new funk influence seeping into drum 'n' bass. For as its best, his music is the very essence of funk. With their clipped beats, like basslines and wailing horn obnoxious, "Betro" and the title track are funk engines obvious to anything but the groove.

Unfortunately, in the interim between its recording and release, archetypes have turned into stereotypes. But Peshay has more than one trick up his sleeve. The music on *Miles From Home* ranges from the hazy soul of "Summer In The City" to the hip-hop of "End Of Story" and the debut jazz funk of "Pacific". Peshay is clearly keen to acknowledge all of his roots, but the result makes for uneven, albeit good listening.

PETER MCINTIRE

## Ponga

DEPT OF FIELD CD 0182 CD

It's might fancy itself as cutting edge music, but it's okay to see it as the direct descendant of that honourable jazz tradition: the blowing session. Call it a couple of horn guys and a rhythm section, a few standards and a blues, and the album's in the can. Ponga might be a new item, but behind the name are our old buddies Wayne Horvitz and Bobby Previte plus a second keyboard man in Dave Palmer. The record's all keyboards and drums in a lot, although Previte also tosses in a few samples and what sounds like an old vintage electric sax. Given the capacity of today's keyboards to generate all manner of sounds, it's ironic it's a bit of a shock when, at the end of a first track full of barely desirable sounds, one of Ponga starts playing some funky Hammond-style lines.

Still, new as you like, it's the same old thing: three guys jamming around, riffing on each other's ideas, nurturing through the history of electric music. "Awesome Wells" more or less nails the spirit in seven minutes, from the dreamy electric piano introduction to the sound of the group turning itself inside out at the other end. Where they would have once needed an enormous amount of studio trickery to achieve its level of noise, half the record was actually recorded live. Well, at least the sound—no fat, pacy, resonant, like the music—is an antidote to the squeaky digital glaze of Mariah's jazz.

RICHARD CRUICK

## Powerfield

ELECTRONIC Electronic Electronic  
INARTACTUE PUE 103 CD

Heavy-duty tracks such as "Dense Field", "Hypnotic" and "Night" invite the new power trio of Joe Galvin (Pong's electric percussion), Gary Smith (electric piano) and Pat Thomas (live electronics) threatens a barrage of monolithic, nihilistic aggression. In fact, Electronic Electronic's recorded live and direct DAT is a far more energetically cranked fusion of improvised electronic, Prog rock congestion and Smith's own brand of post-psychic guitar. Galvin and Smith share a background in jazz improvisation, but from different angles. Smith as a soloist, collaborator with John Stevens, and today as the leader of the avant jazz rock power trio "Mao". Galvin has lived in Hawaii with a pedigree going back on the one hand to ensemble work with Donald Byrd, Horbie Hancock and Gil Evans in the 60s, and on the other, touring with Hugh Hopper and Elton Dean in the mid-'70s. Much of the originality of the music comes from an unexpected but fruitful sandwiching of intense '70s outer rock explorations and contemporary experiments with 'n'k electronics.

The first track stumbles straight into a bleached, noodling, odd-Prog lagoon, mixed with overdone lo-fi bombast, sounding like

Scott-era Herbie Hancock crossed with DJ Speedy's on a Pink Floyd played by Scott. At times, Smith's guitar has parallels with the likes of Kay Holo, Capric Bottum and even Neil Young. But more often he follows his own route, clanging gloriously, almost tearfully into low-toned, critically brushed thunder, then plunging into a different kind of cacophony: a desaturated merry-go-round in which he'll nagle up and down the keyboard with a stretched-on-Bach feel or wash more erratically along the strings, while Galvin skaters and chuses loosely alongside and Thomas thrashes out a scorched storm of electronic grunts, whines and failing radio signals.

If that sounds too fond, there are more sombre and lossily strung moments where the sound opens out into lowering tremolo guitar and icy synthesized tones, even generating a moody, almost Lynchian feel at one point. They also dabble with snippets of sampled conversation, but focus speed, rather than montage, seems to swing the trio into gear. Lurching into deranged Prog polyphony, *At the end*, they get mixed in using dense essays in hysterical power, with the music always on the point of being. But at its best, Electronic Electronic is essentially overheard.

HATT PITCHER

## PJ Proby

Lord Horror  
SAVOY CD 014 CD

Originally published in 1990 by Savoy Books and now withdrawn from publication, David Britton's Lord Horror takes place in a parallel universe in which Hitler managed to survive World War Two. Lord Horror himself, loosely based on Lord Haw-Haw, whining at the war broadcast pro-Hitler propaganda during the British peace, hangs out with historical goons. Hitler, Hitler, Hitler, and the likes of a time-consuming, murdering and cutting up Jews. As Britton spouts a great deal of innuendo and waxes large amounts of paper in overwinding such scenes, describing them down to the minutest detail, some people found it a bit offensive and the novel was subsequently banned in 1991. Savoy Books, Lord Horror's publishers, mounted a successful appeal but decided not to reissue it. Instead the world has been treated to Pong and Ecker comic books, Lord Horror's further adventures in Britton's follow-up *Fantasy, Mythology, The Auschwer Of Or* and now this spooked world release in which lively 60s pop icon and former ELP impersonator PJ Proby reads extracts from the original novel very badly indeed.

The CD comes packaged in an elegant cloth-bound case, complete with blood-splattered graphics and a cute little lightning bolt motif based on the British Union of Fascists' insignia which, students of history will recall, David Bowie and Theatricals David both used at various stages in their careers. It constitutes the surest proof of just how proof we ever needed, that true human evil represents,

in the broadest social and political terms, the triumph of the utterly mediocre.

KEN HOLLINGS

## Public Enemy

There's A Posson Gon' On  
RARE RECORDINGS PUS 004 CD

They may not have the millennial fervour of old, but Public Enemy are back and the time is personal. Horvitz has been betrayed and like Christopher Hitchens, Chuck D's naming names and it's not pretty. Everyone from Puff Daddy to Finkenswartz, Flea to DJ Jaz Jinx finds themselves caught in Chuck's rhetorical crosshairs and no one survives intact. No wonder *There's A Posson Gon' On* was almost released exclusively on the Internet.

Even during his most unironic political phase, Chuck always understood that Horvitz is a metaphor. However, as PCs started to believe that their words could become flesh and that their videos were real life, Horvitz became nothing but a dream machine, lamenting away and giving Horvitz here functions as a microcosm and even though lines like "If you don't own the monster, the monster owns you" may be a bit dated in an age of rappers who are business people first and musicians second, the point still holds. Elsewhere, Chuck boasts, "Here I go! I don't give a damn if you get me! Superstition! I'm the reverse of Jiggy" and vows, "Croyola with them 'n' spray-on hits". The production certainly isn't Jiggy either, with its buzzing basslines, layers of blurred guitars and Bomb Squad echoes. This is the loudest, noisiest Public Enemy album in nine years.

But as indicated by the striking cover art (a group of white kids sitting cross-legged in gas masks, while a black boy sits unaware of the poison surrounding him), the album isn't solely about Horvitz. The old enemy, the new life, the old enemy, the new life, are the expected attacks on the NYPO backstabbers and the New World Order. Like *Public's N' Hour* (last year), however, *There's A Posson Gon' On* comes over like the product of too much in-fighting. Being pissed off by the music industry will never produce music as great as being pissed off with the world, but then again there is no more awesome sound in the world than a pissed off Chuck D. No matter what the reason. As Chuck says, quoting the 15 times world heavyweight champion El Bar, "If you want to be the man, you got to beat the man!" No one has managed it yet.

PETER SHAPRO

## Horatiu Radulescu

Punto Concerto: The Quest  
LSC 90582-02

This is the first time I've encountered the remarkable music of Horatiu Radulescu. Neglected by record companies, there are a few other recordings available, but he's almost

## soundcheck

unheard of outside France. Born in Romania in 1942 but since the late 60s resident in Paris, Radulescu is an originator of spectral music, a compositional technique that exploits the overtones of the natural harmonic series or spectrum. He lived the extraordinary sound icon: a grand piano lying on its side so that its strings can be bowed. On *Cinquiry* (5 less than 16 sound icons are placed around the audience to produce a harmonious 41-note sound picture).

If that piece was one of Radulescu's more extreme conceptions, *The Quiet* marks something of a retreat. Here, the grand piano assumes its normal position and tuning, and it requires the pianist to play the keyboard rather than its strings. But forget the traditional concerto appositions. The first movement has an immediate and almost overpowering impact. Heretic, the braying horns are reminiscent of Tibetan religious music — with a stop-start feel like Szavelsky's *Symphonies Of Wind Instruments*: the movement is constructed on a monumental scale. In later movements, tension seems to have dissipated a little. But though the third starts light and tinkly, complex rhythms and more massive sounds gradually intrude.

The spectral language — a conceptual reply to Pythagoras — offers a solid escape from the sensual strangeness claims Bob Gilmore in his *Reviewers*. Radulescu sees himself as a member, but better known «domains» are Tristan Murail, Jonathan Harvey and Magnus Lindberg. Stockhausen's *Orbiting from 1968*, which used overtones up to the eighth partial, was a key influence and Rancu's use of Just Intonation is a new relation. But a concern with the intervals in the higher overtones is what marks out special composers.

It's easy to get caught up in theory when discussing this lightly constructed music. But the sweeping power is what you first experience in its performance by pianist Orliem Summer and The Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra. Though it's an illusion to regard its musical system as more natural of Radulescu, like Pärt and Xenakis, seems to be longing for a "Music, Older Than Music, as one of his titles has it.

ANDY HAMILTON

## Rehberg & Bauer

Full  
KOLCH 1033 CD

Three years ago General Magic (Ramon Bauer) and Pao (Peter Rehberg) defined the tone of their Mago label with a stream of CDs exploring a warped brand of digital intelligence. Strangely hi-tech minimalist and granular to-k at the same time they catalogued loops and riffs out of the glitchers in their Powerbook music programs, creating just a set of abstract noise sculptures but something more compellingly evocative that soaked off accidenta changes. As a press release for *Soft Wilderness* "The computer

is an optically based medium... and its music composition software is framed in the language of graphic design. The trick is to transform the parameters of these delirious defaults."

Now that electronic music has generally gotten that message seems less subversive and the tracks here, with their uncorrupted looms of Greg counter-culture, law and order and percussive stutters are not so softly intrusiveness. But there's been a shift in their approach too, as if they're started to filter other musical possibilities — perhaps from the more musically oriented Cologne scene or the sound sculpting of Jovanotti's back into the music: both tracks are still abstract, crisp and minimalist, but there's more leeway in the kind of music explored — they might turn out to be abrupt noise riffs hybridic pseudo-ambient grooves or more freedom and texture.

The opening piece shows the duo at their dimension-breaking best: a scudding, accelerated crackle that oscillates rapidly between the left and right speaker channel widening occasionally into low-like stripes of tone then suddenly shearing into a fibrous-like caustic digital boom which fades in and out of view organically like the breath cycle of some deranged cybernetic animal. But the next track adds more melodic, descending tones beneath its whirling intensities, a bleak albeit Techno that gradually gains the gravitas of a slowed down Bond theme surrounded by digital magma.

The changes here are quirky, diving in and out of different musical parameters on the border zone between noise art. Ambient music and more hallucinatory atmospheres. Some tracks work airytime grains of noise into a cyclic cybernetic padder with shades of drum n' bass, while others slip into more drone-like grooves, filtering riffs registers or adding child-like spangles of harps and shimmering stars. By the last track, they've reached a point closer to Paul Schütze's recent work — a dream space centered around a slightly dissonant organ drone with bleeps, xylophone and percussion rattling about like bones.

PAUL PITCHER

## She Satellites

Patronie, Legit  
S&M 105 CD

## Alec Empire

The No Attitude  
DUALITY 101 CD

In an open sunlight with terrorists, the armed response in many modern states is to shoot the woman first. Operating as a futuristic merge genre in an anti-state computer game Alan Teenage and Robert Sweet Swat Swat with a dilemma: should they take out the tyrannical noble ruler Alec Empire or silence hardware operator Ned Empire aka She Satellites? Tough call. Empire might be ATR

froming glomorous and headline strategy when he's not going out on solo sorties like *The No Attitude*. But measured against a yardstick of subversion, Ned's new CD is potentially the most damaging.

As *She Satellites*, Ned Eno accelerates the digital swords into playgrounds programme she tentatively began on her more full-on debut EP. While Alec Poon Lys disorients with the speed thrill dynamics and steel storm force that have brought much noise to an aesthetic standard. In its place, the album features different ways of playing, combining, condensing and testing sound materials to produce noise whose alien beauty handsomely compensates for the lost speed rush. Working virtually beatless, she insists that there's sound design and its corresponding interplay of tones and timbres, should be the source of its excitement, not volume level. And in its frequent beat, Poon Lys restores lessons of pleasure to noise zones where punishment beatings had become the rule.

The *No Attitude* represents no such hearts and minds realignment of Alec Empire's strategies. With his nay-saying persona in the dominant, he has an indefatigable capacity for reconfiguring his choice vocabulary of movement, not beats and noise. As with other DHR Limited edition discs, this one was recorded last December, in high-contrast monochrome sound. It's scarcely less serene, as posing a less frantic than ATR music, and the slower beats create a vivid sonic space allowing Empire to evolve one of his strict charts into a cogent argument. But he declines the chance. Maybe he's finally out of breath.

BIBA GOFF

## Shuttle358

Optimal IP  
12K 12X1005 CD

The all-in-one utility of the personal computer is evolving a new breed of software musicians/artists whose only contact with a keyboard is the one their mouse is connected to. Born into screen consciousness and completely at home in the abstract creative space of binary code, these are the true bedroom composers. The needy bells from down the road who whistled away their childhood in front of an Amiga or an Atari or an Apple II, going about with moods, adventure games and tracker music. Shuttle358's Dan Abrams was probably one such kid.

The methods of digital composition are so second nature to him that his debut release on the New York-based computer music label 12K, which sports the frank equanimity of someone who has spent years struggling to materialize the sounds in his head. Ostensibly ambient music, optimal IP combines the engaging synthetic environments of early space musicians such as David Parsons and Robert Rich with concerti altogether contemporary digital glitches and hard disk disruptions explored by Terre Thiemier, Ryoji Ikeda, Christian Farnes and others. Where noise

arises foreground digital production methods in the service of disjunction, however. Abrams is after a re-synthesis. Subtle and delicate, optimal IP's lean microstatic bittraps return to the peculiar timbres of post-analog sound an evocative sense of context and connection.

Abrams is a student of packaging at Los Angeles Art Center College of Design, a fact reflected in the elegant simplicity and organization of his music. Fashioned from essentially the same store of materials — thin drums, FM tones, scolding textures, melismatic space — each of optimal IP's nine tracks is a slightly shifted perspective on a curiously diverse whole too vast to be taken in all at once. "Gone" and "Tank" are discrete manifestations in space, two-and-out constructions that reveal their logic in the process of disassembly. They're also most impressive in his ability to make the rough textures of digital detritus so playfully musical.

Barely perceptible rhythms inspire the surface of a few of the tracks, as if the superabundance of electronic data styles make anything more than a distant hi-bit figure or an echoing tick pattern obvious and unnecessary. The connection is probably unintentional, however. Abrams space bears work by diffusion, breaking up the space of the work to better distinguish its contours, against its monogamy to live-give from start to finish, employing a poverty of means notable in the context of a hyper-happy electronica. It is remarkable in its expressiveness.

SEAN COOPER

## Spacemans 3

Threebees 3  
SPACE AGE CDMB200 CD

## Spacemans 3

Playing With Fire  
SPACE AGE CDMB111 CD

## Experimental Audio

Research  
PowerLab  
S&M 101-1005 CD

For anyone growing up in the computer wasteland of the mid-to-late 80s, it's not easy to be objective about the far reaching impact of Rugby's sordid Spacemans 3. Alongside a select group of outsiders (Pleasure, Vexillaries, Walking Seeds, Loose Fly, Boudier/Volantini) they kept the torch burning for far out primitive UK psych rock while all around them indie kids were like lollipop cabbages. As well as introducing many to the joys of collecting PCs and Stages bootlegs, we tracks like "Revolution" their dark rip-off of PCs's raw misanthropy ("Back To Comm") they opened up Sun Ra to a new, previously untapped generation through their sluggish demolition of Starship. Like PCs before them, Sonic Boom and Jason Pearce were drawn to The Andromeda

# Innerzone Orchestra Programmed

TAUM LOUD 6709170 CD/2AL/3LP \$50\*

Greatness is within Carl Craig's grasp now, yet he is not quite there. Hidden Inside Programmed is a highly original CD of nine new tracks sounding like little else Craig — or anyone else for that matter — has done before. Unfortunately, either out of fear on Craig's part that this new direction might alienate his fans, or under pressure from his label Taum Loud, Programmed is also loaded with retooled favorites such as "Bug in the Bassbin," "Manufactured Memories," "At Last" and even "Galaxy," which was recorded almost ten years ago. Regardless of their qualities, their inclusion transforms a potentially radical album into a merely good one. In telling you where Craig has been, it confuses the issue of where he is going, by constantly destabilizing the cohesiveness of his present set-up. Taking on board the likes of pianist Craig Taborn and ex-Arkestra percussionist Francisco Mora, Craig travels across spaceways as expansive as the Afrodelic spirits that imbue this project: Sun Ra, Miles Davis, Art Blakey, John Coltrane. Trouble is, he just won't put Planet Earth behind him. Craig calls this music "anti-jazz," the result of a process of taking jazz samples and treating them out

of all recognition. Most of the album lives up to that description. Little more than trace elements of jazz are discernible in such tracks as "The Beginning Of The End," with its cool Keith-style abstract lyricism laid over double-tracked HipHop beats, or "Blaciua," an elegiac slice of baroque Electro, given a further Gothic flourish by Michael Smith's keening violin. Perhaps the most stunning example of this alchemical wizardry is "Erupcion," where delicate Rhodes figures morph almost supernaturally into unrecognizable patterns of spiraling electronics.

As with most of the album, the density of the sound borders on overload, an air of pent-up tension resulting from millennial angst, perhaps, or — sorry to raise this old score, Carl — the harsh reality of life in the urban decay of Detroit. The density only reaches critical mass once, on the astonishing title track, which features Craig screaming manically over a randomly detonating maelstrom of beats and bass.

Elsewhere, he finds some breathing space, first in a passable acoustic take on the old Slyistics hit "People Make The World Go Round," then on the spatial sci-fi atmospherics of "Architecture," a collaboration with Riche Hawtin. They're both a bit easier on the ear, but nowhere near as interesting — particularly the latter, whose inspiration, Craig claims, lies in Blade Runner, surely Techno's most overworked reference. Here is where traditionalists will make the deepest connection



Carl Craig

with the Innerzone Orchestra. But the track is also farthest away from the Craig's original plans for the album. It keeps him too close to home, when he does much of his best work out on the edge. Of course, it can get lonely out there, and fear of loneliness seemingly prevents him truly surfing the cosmos with his spiritual forefathers. Will that time ever come?

PETER MCINTYRE

Pharaph Sanders through the energetic proto-rock spectacle of their live performances, the way they married mysticism and revolutionary rhetoric, and most importantly, the fact that they sounded fucking great on drugs.

A decade later, the first two Spacemen 3 albums, *The Sound Of Confusion* and, especially, *The Perfect Prescription* still sound like beautifully conceived euphoric rock, and *Freeze 3* released on Sonic Boom's own label, catches them riding that career peak. "Sunship" comes from the late LP, *Performance*, while the rest of the tracks are salvaged from the same 1988 concert in Amsterdam's Melweg. The group's concerns of this period were hazy affairs built around extended one chord mantras and grinding sonic veils, and *Freeze 3* plays them in multiple.

The next studio album, *Spacemen With Fire*, is more problematic. Though probably their biggest album at the time, it's less unified effort. On "So Hot," a beautiful gospel-blues Jason Pearce is already starting to map out the territory for Spiritualized, while Sonic Boom's future electronic blow-outs take early shape here in the Rev/Vegeto tribute "Suicide." The two were great collaborators: Sonic Boom's avant aesthetic tempered Pearce's tendency towards drop songforms, and the latter had a strong line in beautiful melancholy melodies and lyrics. (Sonic Boom's lyrics, as evidenced here on a bonus disc of demos and outtakes

were uniformly embarrassing.)

Arguably, Spiritualized have been crucial to an artistic success that Sonic Boom's many subsequent, stumbling projects. He seems to miss the partnership more, but releases like *Antipope* — which consists of two massive clouds of electronics and a short piece of automatic music — and which is released under his EAR gauge, proves that he hasn't entirely exhausted his avant capabilities.

DAVID KEEHAN

## DJ Spinnia

Heavy Beats Volume 1  
RAWKUS 500 TO \$19.95

## Various Artists

The Beyond Real Experience  
SRA 217 CD \$29.95

Brooklyn's DJ Spinnia is currently one of the hottest names in HipHop, and Beyond Real, the label he established in 1995 along with Krennall, his partner in The Jaggedes, is being touted as the only real challenger to Rawkus. Truth is, however, that while *The Beyond Real Experience* showcases some real talent both behind and in front of the decks, they're still a long way behind. Linked to the recent Rawkus compilation *Soundsnapping II* (reviewed in *The Wire* 185) and you can actually hear the boundaries of the music being stretched to their limit. This label sampler, by comparison,

is a little too settled with its own lot.

The main reason lies with Spinnia himself, as he's responsible for producing all but three of the 14 cuts. While he is as adept as The RZA at combining wildly disparate source material into kaleidoscopic beat collages, the latter's are painted in vivid colors; Spinnia's, by comparison, are blurred watercolors, revealing themselves in more subtle ways. The four Jaggedes tracks included here seem on the surface to be little more than good

HipHop. Lozen harder, however, and you can hear just how densely sampled, amenably musical and damn funny these tunes are. Sadly, discretion has no place in HipHop, which is why more immediate tracks by Jaz. Man's Basement Khemsu, though lacking

Spinnia's depth, fit harder and faster. Spinnia's debut solo set is equally unconvincing. With little more than 30 minutes of original music, buoyed up by vinous instrumental and "clean" versions, it all seems a bit aimless. A track like "A Grownamungus" samples those 70s funk records that moved with such verve, but places them in a more enervated environment. Now, horns that were always chasing madly after the beat suddenly find they've caught it, and are left to wander aimlessly. Only when he takes this approach to its extreme does Spinnia put a genuine classic out of the bag. "Watch Dogs" slows things down to the point of despair, seething bass creeping stringy synths that drip like water torture, displaced screams and an awesome

use of the intro to Madness's "One Step Beyond" combine to produce the ultimate paranoid HipHop track. But with the glorious exception of the block rocker "Thee," the rest sounds like a selection of freestyle tools.

PETER MCINTYRE

## Mark Springer

Capture  
DRT 002 CD

On *Capture*, the former Big Rig & Panic pianist opts out of keyboard bop for mysterious Britsian pop. Springer sings songs of desire bravely suspended somewhere between a lovestruck Mark Snowart and an offbeat Robert Forster. At the keyboards he juxtaposes harpsichord, Fender Rhodes, conventional piano and synths. There's an obsessional hint to the work. Melancholia is a recurring motif, first appearing on "Don't Plead Me," it's a nagging phrase, dredged from the reservoir of insidious pop, and by the end of the album, it's really getting to you. To believe his voice and keyboard, Springer pulls in various people to supply electronics. Most successful are The Zoom Quartet, whose pummeling of "Winger" creatively upends the pace.

Springer's methodology might be unique, integrating cracked crates of love with pianist skills that draw on Jack Byard, McCoy Tyner, Keith Jarrett, Keith Tippett, along with

dozes of Debussy. There's always plenty going on in the pieces to offset the occasional touches of pretty pastoral. "In-Tension" is an ambitious and interestingly failed marriage of lyrical free-jazz piano and drum 'n' bass. "Your Body Temperature" is a truly straggly piece of pop, a ballad with romping 70s-style beats. Typical of the album's ragged-edged edge, this melodic music is apt to wane and break under the pressure from intruding voices, wandering piano and wailing electronics. Fortunately when Springer surfs out at the end on a wave of harpsichord-meets-beatbox perversity, he doesn't feel compelled to be up to the loose ends

WILL MONTGOMERY

# Tricky

Jordanape  
ISLAND 8937 CD

Has there ever been a more frustrating music than Tricky's? His combination of sexual dilution and wild fusion makes him the Prince of the 90s, but his obvious twisted genius is too often obscured by the same skewed sensibility that makes him interesting in the first place. Ever since *Jordanape*, his ideas have been underlaid by awkward, brittle production and a paranoia that has moved from a kind of diffuse dread to a bruised ego psychosis directed at specific targets. *Autopsy* is no exception.

Like his last album, *Angels With Dirty Faces*, Jordanape tries to wipe the smirk off the faces of hip-hop players who are laughing all the way to the bank. But crucially, this time around Tricky has been hanging out in Miami far away from the music biz, spending his time on the beach chatting up Jennifer Lopez lookalikes while this is definitely his lightest album and "I Like The Girl," "Don't Be Diddy" and "Hot Like A Sauna" see Tricky and his P.M. Band dig just for get drunk and/or lap this way from New Orleans. *Autopsy* is not at all Southern comfort. Jordanape starts out with piano, acoustic guitar and a sitar flourish that brings to mind the dark days of 70s American A.M. radio, and then settles in to a wibe somewhere between Trevor Horn, Rupert Holmes, Bill Lawwell Organized Noise (who makes shy, polyrhythmic albums for Dele rapsters like OutKast and Goodie Mob).

On top of this anguished, slightly clumsy sound Tricky plays guitar-hates with lines like, "Your profile is too high/How you gonna be a comic/funny/You watch too many films." Although his willingness to confront hip-hop's ugliness is laudible, his refusal to take on hip-hop on its own turf is largely a cop-out. When he faced Public Enemy and Cypress Hill with David Sylvian and Bowie on *Manonius* he questioned hip-hop's status, even as he sought to make links to that community. Although Tricky works with Cypress Hill's DJ Muggs and The Roots' Rhyss, Gracia here, Jordanape largely forgoes beats and rhythms in favour of an art-rock mess. When you can write lyrics like "Desiring of seeing a girl like Monica/Every day be like Hannuht" you

don't need to hide behind all the production values. As ever, the kernels of an amazing fusion and a singular vision are audible, but someone needs to put Tricky together with a producer who don't take too mess.

PETER SHAPIRO

# Mike Westbrook

Clad Day  
BKA 0413/15 CD

Mike Westbrook's engagement with the poetry of William Blake has been unfolding for more than 25 years, since he was commissioned to write for Adrian Mitchell's musical *Tiger*. The composer's evident affinity with Blake's heterodox voice has precipitated some of his most memorable work, previously collected as *Bright As Fire*. The Westbrook *Clad Day* (1980), *Clad Day* recorded in 1997, brings together the complete settings to date. The Brass Band, recovered for the occasion, rewrites Chris Secor, Peter Whymann and Alan Waples' an investigating session, his, solidified in producing directive and energetic solos, are now-heralds comfortably integrated within the ensemble sound. The rhythm section of Steve Barrie on bass and Dave Barry on drums, Westbrook plays piano, his wife Kate contributes tenor horn and voice. A further voice, belonging to Phil Minton, is a crucial component, its strength and flexibility seen the perfect vehicle for Blake's prophetic utterance.

The emotional centerpiece of the set remains "Let The Sower," which has become Westbrook's best known composition since it was covered by Van Morrison on *A Sense Of Wonder* (1984). The song has an anthemic quality, with an uplifting melody to match the inspirational text. Minton's voice soars powerfully. The spoken section of the piece, setting "What Is The Price Of Experience?" has still not found its desired vehicle. Westbrook himself does a decent, rather understated job here, but the text awails a voice which will add sardonic fire without melodrama. As Westbrook's recitation ends the sound emerges of a choir from the Blackheath Conservatoire of Music and the Arts. It is a bold move to use the voices of children in such a context. Their symbolic value might seem dangerous at best, but Westbrook deploys the choir judiciously throughout *Clad Day*, using pungent instrumental support to cut through the saccharine, as on "The Tiger And The Lamb", where the thematic relevance of this strategy is especially clear. On "Song Of Spring" the children are particularly effective: individual voices are differentiated to form a mosaic, over rising woodwinds and a quartet of guitars. For a sense of the scope of Westbrook's writing, compare this with "Long John Brown And Little Mary Bell," a free showcase for Minton's skill as a dramatic interpreter. *Clad Day* may not be the definitive mission of Westbrook and Blake, but it confirms that the composer thrives in his wistfully company.

JULIAN COWLEY

# the boomerang

New releases: rated on the rebound

In case you're in a hype-free zone and have somehow avoided the alt-metal frenzy, *Os Mutantes* were a Brazilian group associated with the 60s Tropicalia movement and who gave The Beatles a bossa nova lit and a samba swing. The Best Of *Os Mutantes: Everything Is Possible* (Luaka Bop 47251 CD) collects material from their first five albums with plenty of crossover with the recent Orphan music releases of their first three records. Everything Is Possible might have the leg up, though, in that it's got most of their great first album and two songs from the occasionally magnificent (when they don't sound like ELO in Portuguese) *Jardim Botânico*, which have been reissued. *Os Mutantes*' best songs are those that reconcile psychedelia with groove, the ronic *Spaghetti Western* tale "O Luteador," the Samento-esque "Cantor De Hamburgo," the Jorge Ben-Geddy-jazz-samba "A Minha Menina." On the other hand, "Le Premier Bonheur Du Jour" is a clear antecedent of the Stereoevangelist style. Of course, the pleasure that most people find in *Os Mutantes* is that they can listen to melody again without having to buy Gay Dad records, and without worrying about the lyrics, which translate into English thus: "But the people in the dining room are preoccupied about birth and death."

A history lesson that swings. **The Waiters** *Desire Away Sex Sals From Studio One Heartbeat* (11661 769 1 CD) captures the first of an early version (1963-65) of the Jamaican group, with 11 parts, showcasing some of the group's roots. A US influenced but idiosyncratic R&B on "Let The Lord Be Seen In Her" Bob Marley pleads like a champion (Sam Cooke) evokes like a twister into twister (an improbably delicious version of "What's New Pussycat?"), a dew-dew "White Christmas" which registers even more improbable perfection. The classic (about of "I Stand Predominant") is worth the admission price alone, and the spare, moving "Where Is My Mother" comes in two versions on the record. The Waiters-to come began to take shape: roots were something that came later. The switch from gospel roots to pop transience you hear in US singles like *Coolie* is here reversed: say R&B melodies on the last of many releases.

For a sense of the scope of Westbrook's writing, compare this with "Long John Brown And Little Mary Bell," a free showcase for Minton's skill as a dramatic interpreter. *Clad Day* may not be the definitive mission of Westbrook and Blake, but it confirms that the composer thrives in his wistfully company.

born in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1940, the late **John Herppich** was a founder member of BAG (Black Arts Group) in St Louis. Although modelled on Chicago's AACM, BAG people like Joe Bowie and Luther Thomas were always a bit more streetwise, their blues and funk delivered with more conviction. Herppich made a splash in late 70s New York, and his *Blue Boy* (Screwgun SCREWGUN 70000 CD) was recorded for his own Hban label in 1977, edited by sax pupil Tim Berne, who now returns the compliment by pressing the set on his own bop imprint. Herppich's overdubbed flute, sax and minimal percussion to create spare, bluesy pieces. His improvisations are based on a simple pentatonic motif, and though his playing is never less than poised and intimate, he is perhaps better remembered for his fabulous, extravagant contributions to freely swinging collectives (for instance, his scuzzing solo on Jean-Paul Benoit's suite "Mother Earth").

For those who heard it when it was first released in Europe in 1986 by the Belgian Cantabile Disc label, **Mahomed Ahmed** *Ere Mele Mele* (reissued on *Rebels*) of Ethiopia and its culture like a mirror impacting from outer space. We'll see the news footage of famine on a Biblical scale, heard the tales of genocidal dictatorships, both religious and military, but the music on *Ere Mele Mele* provided a more humbling and identifiable image, one suggestive of urban night clubs in Addis Ababa where the clientele were serenaded by wild groups whose grasp on music sounded like it had been learned from listening to a combination of John James Brown and Fela Kuti records and a few artifacts from the first wave of 60s psychedelia, which had then been distorted to fit the local kurching rhythms patterns and vocal lines. Now rescheduled with extra tracks as the seventh volume in the *Bada Musique* label's exemplary (Ethiopian) series (*Bada Musique* 82980 CD), *Ere Mele Mele* still sounds extraordinary. Recorded in Addis between 1975-78 for the Kalla label, the music is a woozy, nocturnal mix of wah-wah guitar, reedy organ, booming and drenched soul basslines, ululating sax sections and clattering percussion. And Ahmed's voice is that of an imploring, devastated lover, more and falling in the depths of the mix, as if he were engaged in a last-will-and-testament call-and-response dialogue with himself. *Emmanuel* (Vr 6 Almar) (*Bada Musique* 82979 CD) is also devoted to Ahmed. On these 1973 recordings, which comprised the singer's debut album, the sound is similarly raw and uncooked, the music surrounded by a tin can of reverb, but its electric power still burns through, and the CD contains a rendition of the slow-burning "Ere Mele Mele" that sounds even more shrouded in dark night than the later version. *Reviewed by Tony Hemmings (an*



# in brief classical

Reviewed by Julian Cowley

## Joseph Benzola *The Sound Of One Hand Clapping* ANAMA MUSIC 004 CD

Anama promotes Joseph Benzola's home recordings, among them *Reflections*, *Serenity* and the *Third For* (Anama Music D01-3). Images of fly agnec mushrooms and references to the canonical avant-garde of classical, jazz and rock innovation signal his aspiration to align with creative mind expansion. In reality, this is pretty mundane fare, excessively devoted to synthesizer soundings and technized frog rock sonnettes. Occasional scurrying percussion sketches are more enticing. Awaiting wishing to initiate a cult following is advised to start with *One Hand Clapping*.

## Paul Chihara *Paul Chihara on American Masters* BIS CD

Currently a Musical Supervisor at the Disney Studio, Chihara has won Broadway approval. This retrospective, covering 1965-80, includes a skilful, colorful *Concerto For Saxophone And Orchestra* and some folky choral music. But the *Tree Music* series written during the late 1960s, confirms that Chihara possessed a genuinely distinctive compositional voice. *Driftwood* for string quartet, *Branches* for bassoon and percussion, and *Willow Willow* for deep wind instruments and percussion, suggest

folkish music, of some are a forest out. *Light* is a wonderfully understated double bass meditation featuring Serban Turetsky.

## Aldo Clementi *Madrigale* HMCWOPART 112 CD

Clementi emerged from encounters with minimalism and aleatoric composition bearing a conception of music as self-referential process. Each piece strives memorably towards its own termination. Phrases are conglomerated until they collapse beneath their own critical mass. But despite his reputation for density, the music here, mostly first recordings although ranging in time from *Stud* (1956) to *Very Creator* (1997), has the structural clarity of card houses, raised until unstable, and the delicacy of musical boxes resolutely winding down in tandem. Instrumentation includes oboes, clarinet, cello and strings. The few Ensemble is scrupulous in its performance.

## Roman Haubenstock-Ramati *Concerto A* THE HANDBOOK 114 CD

## Roman Haubenstock-Ramati *Mobile For Shostakovich* HANDBOOK 114 CD

*Haubenstock-Ramati lived for many years in*

Vienna, but he had begun to absorb the influence of Anton Webern while still in his native Poland. His reputation rose largely on his contribution to graphic notation. In 1959 he organized the first exhibition of graphic scores, and on his 'mobile', kinetic musical assemblages analogous to Alexander Calder's sculptural constructions. Both innovators encourage interpretive freedom, but for Haubenstock-Ramati this was a means to create externally coherent yet internally energized works. Ensemble *Recherche* and Ensemble *Avantgarde* meet that conception unequivocally on these impressive recordings of chamber pieces, ranging historically from the serialist string trio *Alceste* (1948, revised in 1976), to the weird trio 'mobile' *Aur Kankinsky* (1987).

## Henneman Strijkwartet *Henneman Strijkwartet* BIS CD

## Ig Henneman *Tenent* Indigo 405 CD

Vocalist Mary Oliver and cellist Tristan Henneman from America, bassist Wilbert De Jocke and viola player Ig Henneman from Holland, form a striking string quartet. They illustrate well how a group comprising musicians accustomed to expressive improvisation will sound markedly different to a quartet specifically trained as a primarily interpretive ensemble. Renaissance forms are evoked, modernist motifs are brandished, but Henneman's compositions are designed to accommodate relaxed improvisational play, and that gives them their particular pungency. De Jocke and Henneman join Henneman in the *Tenent*, which also includes *Ad Baars* on clarinet, and *Steve Angelique* on drums. *Indigo* is a theatrically oriented song cycle, lasting 31 minutes and sung in Dutch.

## Instrumental Acoustiek *Is. Chl.* FACTORY CD

In the tradition of redundancy inaugurated by The Orchestral Vulture Bell, Instrumental recreates tunes by the likes of Ennio, The Orb, Pity and The Shamen using three violas, cello and a rather subtle bass. For convincing chamber rock, refer to Rachel's

## Midland Hotel *L. Shapiro* non-droit 5 CD

Lan Paxon assumes the guise of Poland. Hotel for his organic assemblage of tape manipulations and instrumental tempering. *Acoustic* events are sparse, subdued and slightly out of focus. Tales are provided, but they seem incidental, as L. Shapiro achieves a curious continuity through its sustained obliqueness and refusal to explain (for

example, there are 16 niche points for only 14 tracks). Pie near Jocelyn Robert.

## Peter Paul Nash *Symphony No 1* Apollinaire Chorus who noss CD

The *Apollinaire Chorus* occupy the bulk of this CD. Nash describes them as 'a collection in monochrome', and their appeal is primarily to followers of contemporary unaccompanied choral work. Ties to the French poet Guillaume Apollinaire offer some compensation for those of us who don't meet that criterion. *Symphony No 1*, on the other hand, has the immediate dramatic impact of a work whose undeniable vibrancy contains the seeds of its own disintegration. Tonal consolations mark the onset of catastrophic Concept and resolution carry sufficient weight to serve as Nash intended as a metaphor for germs of destruction inhabiting life's deceptively sound processes.

## Elizabeth Panzer *Dancing In Place* CD BIS 50 CD

Happist Panzer has played under the Bang On A Can organ, and worked with Butch Morris. Here she plucks alone on three of her own compositions, and others by Eleanor Howard and Richard Enghorn. Her response to the instrument's detritus is not the amplified blitz which Zeena Parkins regularly delivers, but a nuanced subtlety that helps to neutralise the harp's intrinsic sweetness. The album is delicately textured, but Panzer can really make the strings buzz and rasp.

## Maggi Payne *The Extended Flute* CD RECAYNE 407 CD

Maggi Payne is a respected recording engineer whose compositions of electronic music can be found on the *Ecce Homo* Crystal (1991). Three further pieces feature in this collection. Extension of flute technique often boils down to circular breathing and multiphonic shrillness, but Payne follows an alternative route, embedding her breath in wishes of electronic sound. She also performs works by Mark Trayle, William Brooks and Roman Haubenstock-Ramati, but the highlight is *Q&A*, by interactive electronics maestro David Behrman. Payne played flute on Behrman's *Glass* On The Other Ocean (1978), but here her role is closer to that assumed by trumpeters Rhys Chatham and Ben Neill in their memorable realizations of Behrman's work.

## Nerve Proximi *Biological And Chaotic* MUSIC (all records) 114 CD

Based in Geneva, Proximi composes and performs with computer. He draws on biomathematical algorithms, strange attractors and fractals when generating structures. Fluid drums, added to what is presumably a virtual piano, transform the laboratory work into music of apparently infinite vitality. The *Biological Music* sequence has something of the appeal of Luc Ferrari's tensely animated

piano-percussion duet *Critique 75*. That recording is successfully augmented by virtual flute on *Chaotic Music*.

## Alfred Schnittke *String Quartets Nos 2 & 3* Paganini Quartet ANARQUE 26707 CD

Schnittke was a masterly paradox, in that recording of his complete string quartets. Kronos portrayed him as an interloper on Kronos, but here, The Lark Quartet play down the postmodern savvy, and consequently their reading of the third quartet is a more straightforward homage to Orlando Di Lasso and Beethoven. The second quartet here extends rather than reflects upon the tradition of Russian devotional music. In both cases the tempo tends to be slower than that favoured by Kronos. For the quartet, they are joined by Gary Graffman who, despite an injury restricting him to use of left hand alone, does justice to the elegant tensions of the piece.

## Tommy Smith *Gymnopedie* ANAMA MUSIC 004 CD

Adapted by pianist Murray MacLachlan, saxophonist Smith plummets into cloying depths on the far side of John Harle, where *Satie* and *Debussy* hang suspended in sacrosanct solution. The classical gobblers are there to lure listeners to two sonatas composed by Smith himself. His playing on both is immaculate, but the compositions, for all their surface fur, are laden with stretched conventionality. There are constant reminders of Smith's phenomenal technical ability, but the music remains frustratingly buttoned up.

## Michael Waites & Natalie Soudan *Winter* Blue unit records 03441 11 CD

These pieces, collectively named *Skinner* after Tarkovsky's essential epic, were actually composed for Alan Tanner's film *Requiem*. The entire set is a tribute to the Russian director and sounds unpredictably buoyant, if tinged at times with anguished serenity. While viewing Tarkovsky's films, Waites acquired the means to counter depression, and his compositions are often an affirmative response. His piano playing, rhythmically agile and melodically assured, is effectively interwoven with Natalie Soudan's gracefully flowing violin lines.

## Chen Yi *Sparkle* ORION 804 CD

Born in Beijing, now resident in America, Chen Yi studied with Alexander Goltz and Hans Davidovsky. Nonetheless, her musical thinking remains fundamentally Chinese, reliant upon traditional materials and principles, even when filtered through characteristically Western instrumentation. The legacy is, of course, most apparent when *Chen's* instruments feature, as in the late solo *Duo Mei*, and *Song In Winter* a sharp measure of harpichord, bamboo flute and Chinese zither.

# in brief critical beats

Reviewed by Peter Shapiro

## A Guy Called Gerald The John

**PEEL SESSIONS** (STANGE FURT SOUNDS) CD  
Collecting the Guy's Peel sessions from 1989 '89 and '95, this CD confirms the penitence Gerald Sanzoni as one of dance music's rare talents. While none of the early material is terribly groundbreaking (with the exception of the mindbogglingly awful "Bruford" and the superior "Rockin' Rick" which pitches House somewhere between the synth stab chaos of mid-80s Pop Art Hop and Art Of Noise's sardonic pastiche), no one was a better synthesizer of the ideas circulating at the time. Gerald worked the clavé (present on his Rolands more effectively than anyone else the side of Arthur Baker), collected extra rhythmic definition and more swing into House's rigid parameters. While Gerald's rhythmic gift served him well in drum 'n' bass by the time of the 95 session, he was paying greater attention to texture the cold wind blowing through the carboard industrialism of "Time Labyrinth," the starless steel roots of "Onobutika," and the machine chatter of "3 2 B One".

## A Sides Live In NYC

**HOT RECORDS** CD  
Most live albums may well be stopgaps, but the one feels like nothing less than the breath of life. Recorded at New York's Konkrete Jungle with Afrika Bambaataa's son TC team on the mic, it proves that on the night, night with the right DJ and the right crowd, drum 'n' bass can transcend the most basic beats and textures of the two years. It might not be quite as exhilarating as a DJ Hyde set, but it builds up a fierce momentum nonetheless, and opens a way forward for a scene that is otherwise dead in the water.

## Arsonists Are The World Burns

**HATSON CD**  
These Brooklyn showmen with connections to the legendary Rock Steady Crew could be the closest underground HipHop gets to mainstream acceptability. The Arsonists put on an amazing live show, fueled by an engaging collective energy and channelled through their playful sarcasm. Even so, radio wouldn't touch these guys for all the payola in Alton Frenchie's wildest dreams. **PGS D-Slay**, Svel Bockie, Jee Dee Q-Unique and Freshy have memories that extend further than the first Wu-Tang album, but for all their complex characters, their inability to recognise a hook if it was set in one of their cheeks seriously limits their appeal. It's a pretty good record, but they devote too much energy to their acts and not enough to getting their point across.

## DJ Beattie Droid

**SPINNA SPINNA** CD  
With enough sense to push beyond the confines of its boggie-eyed breaks, Spinnare's latest release from Daniel Beattie is one of those (usually English) Empire building discs that seeks to wrap its arms around every style going. So "Tangierland" is a fanged, feline funk trail through a swamp of congas and xylophones, "Backburst" and "Kachwater" harbour distant memories of outdoor raves, "Paint" and "Erwartung" do the jazz thing, "Heretic" and a hidden track do the Megalithia thing, "Signa" and "Alvaclara" star it all together and get lost in a buzz of ghosts. Better than Big Beat's bubble-on-zoo, but still not a keeper. **Rob Young**

## Frédéric Galliano

**KATO FITE** CD  
The second coming of World Music continues apace with the latest marriage of Sahelian dance and House wallpaper from Parisian Frédéric Galliano. If it's not as successful a fusion of Africa, America and Europe as George Russell's *Electric Zenobia* for Souls Under By Nature, it's because a too respectful Galliano places the region front and centre, while the synths are merely lava.

## Ken Ishii

**Misprogrammed Day** CD  
Disco never dies — the lustre on its rhinestones may temporarily fade, but they always get a shine in the end. One of the set artists you'd expect to find ganging into its ghetto, Ken Ishii goes disco mad on "Misprogrammed Day." His detractors might argue that Ishii has jumped on weary passing bandwagon, from ambient to disco revivalism, like The Bee Gees before him, but at least he rides them with more panache than his fellow detestants. **DJ Q** and **The Ahnatas** turn out in appropriately tacky partywear, but Dave Angel does the original proud with tasteful lifts and hip-hugging contours.

## Kid 606

**Dubplatestyle wv** CD  
In contrast to the blood and terror liturgies of many of his cohorts, Kid 606's combination of noise overload and breakdowns comes off almost as celebratory. There are plenty of goose-squeaking S&P beats and feedback whistles, but at least he lays off the steam and drug-related carnation smirks. Instead, "Dubplatestyle" is all about the funk, bracing incensement of adrenalin, punk noise and the play of textures. As an added bonus, the record includes dozens of killer hook grooves.

## Los Chicharrons

**Catch Me! Psychedelic Fox** CD  
A general rule of thumb: anyone who names themselves after deep fried pork rinds is worthy of your attention. Naming themselves after the Mexican variety, Los Chicharrons don't fail to deliver. *Catch Me!* is disguised Big Beat-House at its catchiest, with a Luisiana Holloway soundtrack, a stringing guitar lick a Shift sweep in the background and grinding sub bass. "Psychedelic Fox" begins like a Steppenwolf descent on a Mongo Santanana descarga, before it collapses into a cock rock routine. The Jimmy Casar Bunch's "It's Just Begun"

## Ludovic Navarre

**From Detroit To St Germain** CD  
Better known as St Germain, Ludovic Navarre is revered in House circles as Larry Heard's future heir. As a subscriber to the belief that death was the least of House music's vices, I thought he was grossly overrated. This compilation of his early EPs proves me wrong, however, as it brings more bottom and into play while holding back on his more characteristic waxy synths and neon blues motifs. At his best, as on "The Black Man" and "Alabama Blues," Navarre is one of the few (if not the only) House producers to recognise that tradition and the future are not incompatible. His samples of old bluesmen earth his astral projectors to the carpet from under them with his stunning mix of "Alabama Blues," the Rozeeta Stone of the UK Garage scene.

## The Nextmen

**Break The Mould** CD  
With a trio of American MCs in tow (London's Ward Man [Bakoo and Search] come over like Wes Montgomery on quailwads on an EP that falls somewhere between Shawn J. Priest and Pete Rock. But then there is a family connection: Rock's brother, Grap Luva, guests on "Break The Mould." Rookie rapper Soulson is a little bit clumsy on "Clarity," but the star of the show must be the Bronx's Red Cloud, who sounds like a combination of Sade X and Treach on "Mental Alchemy." Boogie, but effective.

## Rasco

**The Birth** CD  
A year on from his excellent *Time Works For No Man* album, Rasco trades Peanut Butter Wubs' beats for the more direct, neck-snapping rhythms of Proemian Hip-Bank and his cohort. The more streamlined, less adorned beats of *The Birth* better display Rasco's awesome skills. Not much of a wordsmith, he gets over solely on the strength of one of the purest flows in the business. The pleasure of this EP are strictly formal: 11 listened to it four or five times

and I can't remember a word he says, but it's pretty devastating all the same.

## Sonar Circle

**Radius** CD  
Sonar Circle's debut album isn't going to convince any non-believers that drum 'n' bass isn't dead, but it might just show the remaining apostles that not that Radius does anything new, mind producer Dominic Stanton has obviously been listening to Raveful Unwired, by his label bosses 4 Hero. But it's jazzy without being snappy, warm without being adhered, and best of all, it's unfashionably polyrhythmic.

## Stromba

**The Punch** CD  
Unlike the Peters song of the same name, Stromba's "Rigor Mortis" accurately describes The Punch EP from which it came. The work of James Oyer and Tom Tyler from the DC Recording crew, the *Punch* is clearly downmarket. But in terms of the groovy beats and track, as in its atmospheric, supports from '70s soundtracks (discoated waltz-walt, calagag, hampi) locate the music's pulse, however faint.

## Tarwater featuring Tikiman

**Lake A Miracle** CD  
Like A Miracle is straightahead, eszaz reggae's version, "Miracle Ewers" however, is a dry, resolutely modernist click disk that refuses to how to convention or tradition. "The Bridge" is by-the-book cinematic, but enlivened by Tikiman's superb vocals and a synth passage similar to the intro to The Who's "Baba O'Riley".

## DJ Vadim

**It's Obvious** CD  
Vadim moves to straight-up HipHop has produced the best work of his career. Featuring the sweet drawing *Urgent MC* Blu Runt, "It's Obvious" is a serious head nodder built on a lot of bass, a little kick drum, a backwards cymbal crash and a softest-wend chime. The similarly heavy "The Terrorist" is gloomier, with Boy Area throws. *Moslem Man* dropping twisted threats and schizophrenic soliloquies along the lines of his compadre Kool Keith.

## Cosmo Vitelli

**We Don't Need No Smurf** CD  
Vitelli's original mix of "We Don't Need No Smurf" is a agreeable, if slightly summery boogie jam-House that's just fine for a cookout on the beach. Afrika Bambaataa's portland mixes are little more than bad versions of "Planet Rock." But hang through them, and you are rewarded with DJ Spinn's elegant remixing, which features Les Poet. Just Naudin dropping some cosmic rhythms in a cadence courtesy of Sugar Hill Gang's Big Bank Hank.

# in brief electronica

Reviewed by Ian Penman and Rob Young

**Blue** Corrosion's *use use use* (use011) is nothing about the "mini-album" diverges from the script: one word titles, fringe door graphics, unclipping production. T-square beats, player (cat samples) but it repays more than it borrows, its bedrock tone closer to the better parole of *Plasmagore* than the featherweight doppleme of much Ambient — an augmented melancholy runs through it like a wire dark stream. Hardly contrived, its whisks lie on the side of precision (a tight mix of discrete elements, dub nmsht, 80s funk bass, semi-industrial waltz) owned with surging threefold samples like the cat scratch drop-in of "Rainier." Seduction rather than sedition, but one step further, the Blue duo could be alive. Summerhouse, the haunted gondola drift of "Bear" (P)

**DJ Bobo** 33 Revolutions Per Minute (use043) 30  
There's enough Bright Stuff going on under this Dane's trendy hat to overlook the fact that he once used the alias James Bong. It's a CD of two planes. Not much seems to be kicking through the first 180 degrees: malenknight lounge keyboards with chocky-chock FX and muted humour. *o la* Scruff and Money Man, the kind of future ska that'll be inescapable on 31 December '99. Obviously, once he's the grafts speak rather than banking on an arc of homogeneity, things snap to and veer up, darker, more intriguing the unexpected micro-quality guitar on "How Do They?" the icy texture flow of "Piano Pieces Pt. 1 & 2" (this lunging ferocity of "Holly Messenger") and "Bleuett Of Manholes" tops a genuinely full groove a keyboard/housework like the old TV/President household record for Generation Family. Nothing revolutionary, but hints of approaching critical mass (P)

**Dr. Aimo** Man Made Motion (art0045) 445/22/20  
If Rimmel is "a division of Mike Pissavau," it's a sub-division for an MP Corp satellite, the s bewilderingly monotone, retro, pleasant. The one word 1000s — static, motion, automatic, vision — are sadly indicative of the general level of imagination, with nothing here not proposed and resolved in an empty, predictable fashion. Software Ambient pass us (1992?) sell-by date (P)

**Funkstörung** Additional Productions (use010) 710001/0020/20  
Following through on their "signal disruption" moniker, Bavarian duo Michael Felsch and Chris De Luca stamp their maker's mark quite distinctly on this collection of nervous

for Björk, Wu-Tang Clan, Fimble, East Fishback Project and more. The design concept replicates the controlling factors of corporate logo-competency, likewise each track they scribble gets their familiar abrased, scragged beats stamped into it permanent as a watermark. Their knack for yanking beats into eerie new forms works best for the Wu NYC's lockdown can get tinged two whiney. Plunk kids to fuck 'em up, who mentioned *hazard*? (P)

**Hazard** North Ash International (use044) 45  
Cover an like an EOM LP (revised by a Seasonally Affected depressive, titles like an email conversation between a Derrida nut ("Absence Or Presence?") and a Vivaldi buff (all the rest) a dully unemphatic meditation on (cut off, snowed in) Place, long drone pieces flecked and shrouded with spoor, track, glare, trail. Too many studio biffes make music which mutes up to think it was made under mental siege conditions. Hazard's BJ Niven seems like maybe he knows whereof he speaks. The sound of a stealth bomber thinking to itself: "I'm getting too close for this, and heading for the far places to shiver and rust" (P)

**Like A Tim** (in Serious) 0010/0010/0010  
**David Kristian** Beneath The Valley Of The Modulators (use046) 16/00  
Both these sets move like electronic's bad cliché of sad knoll threads listed up inside a dead planet rock of MEI MEI (C) graphic, crisp titles — all told, no DISCOURSE outside a gracelessly unneeded solipsism, underlined by Tim Van Leupen's "no thanks to anybody" and Kristian's "no sampling allowed" (FUCK your creepy 'nasty' DK?) I'm Serious is built unweary and underminded, somewhat, Beneath is too earnestly pleasant to justify its maker's ambiguity. In a right world, these antiseptic gauds would be sacrificed to the goddess Thaumatz (P)

**Peter Namlook & Klaus Schulze** The Dark Side Of The Moog VIII (use045) 16/00

**Peter Namlook & Move D** The Retro Rockers (use046) 16/00  
I save the name Klaus Schulze and the photos of banks and banks of Keith Emerson like boards and a running time of 80 minutes — recorded here at I ask you, a jazz festival — and I reach for my 1977 sten gun. Sadly, it didn't confound my prejudices. Dark Side? I don't think so. Worse, they toss out a drum and bass track which sounds exactly like two old smart alecks with too

much equipment doing drums if "bass" (one louder) it's hard to damn Namlook to hell when John New (a compadre Lussell) seems like a Force for Good, but you've got to draw a line in the sand. The pairing with Move D (aka David Haskins) is better, but still sounds like cold Prozac sky rather than late opening wormholes (P)

**Ocio** Medida Universal (use046) 16/00

**Trineo** Trineo (use045) 0004/0004/0004  
Gustavo Cerati has been breezing through various Argentine pop fields since 1983 in his Soda Stereo trio. In Ocio, he forges best with Buenos Aires's young cluster of clustered Technolies, collaborator Flavio E. customs Cerati's delicately urban atmosphere on a Modernist/Bauhaus rhythm grid.

Flavio's own project, Trineo, pursues his own line of new discharges (see "Basic Concept" rehearsing with Kessler in the garden shed. Listening to hear such fleet music, swaying away from cultures with so much recent administrative heaviness (P)

**Pentax** Konradt (use046) 16/00  
**Reinhard Vogt** his old and travel sounds like an R&D exercise that should have been left on the test bench. Cologne's Proton crowd has kept up dazzling quality control over its Techno output for such a sustained period because, like Maurizio on his early singles, it manages to come up with ever finer calibrations and rebalancings of a few basic elements, varying by subtraction and realignment rather than addition and novelty. But Reinhard's six Pentax pieces (ten listed on the sleeve) cogitate into a lumpy broth as he tinkers with brother Mike (aka T-Rex) glen-beams, shifting through mud without catching any gold dust (P)

**Pione** For Beginner Piano (use046) 16/00

Some bits of this are nice (as in BPM) summer stunts but too much of it is too Nice (as in making the feigned 404 message sound like Napalm Death). A quaint little ps-psyder spinning its way of too-obvious influences, in concentrate it's too nice plink for its own good. Some kind of reward, though for a running time of 39 minutes, when everyone else is doing a Hilary and Armond to get to 80 mins plus. Standout track "Puck" is already obvious as a single (P)

**Proem** Burn, Platte No 1 (use046) 16/00

Sounds too much like it is — one guy (Richard Bailey) barked away shuffling his byle portfolio, spouting out pleasantly crisp beats and bolls. The titles give it away: meaningless immittance ("Father") or post-Orb whackness ("Old School Pudding"). Hydrant is apparently a site for "artists exploring freedom electronic

music." I can't hear anything of the first three words of that phrase here (P)

**Stars Of The Lad** (use046) 16/00

Where Pione overplay the Euro-swing song card. Oiling on unalloyed love. Stars' Adam Witke and Brian McBride (from Austin and Chicago) pluck a different card from the Claque Strategies pack, do their own seduced riff on the No Playboys thing and hit the moon. A 42 minute three piece suite, it feels like three hours and goes by in a second — which maybe goes with the domain indicated by the title. I don't know whereof these guys treat their bloodstream (previous release: *Musik For Nervous Gears*), but the sure lies on undim spent cerebral clarity (vintage tag) (P)

**Stilluppsteypa** Reduce By Reducing (use046) 16/00

**Stilluppsteypa** Hús (use046) 16/00  
You don't need a degree in Icelandic to work out what this electronic group's name means, because it's the total fabrication. The group do hail from a land of ice and live though now live in Holland. As if their roots weren't already swayed enough, they draw out sound narratives intersect with the dysfunctional, antirealist creations of Austria's Farmers Manual, only with a more desecrated sense of ebb, shock and flow. The snowpinks and pigtroughs of *Reduce By Reducing* are tracks for two dynamic for domestic hi-fi. Their noise escapes from tremulous and isolated organs, as if combined too long in a dark, dark space. The title of *Hús* (Hus) Happened gestures towards the Schrebergers' Cat theory, and its single track begins with a speeded, petting rhythm that could be a sonic replica of patches written in and out of existence. Stilluppsteypa sound like they're in for this more than just kicks (P)

**Unit** The Narcotopical Symphony (art0046) 0002/0004/0004

This seems like some kind of "concept" search/stretch (but as its components are speed, speed, downers, swirling machines, mega vapours and wallpaper, *o la* my me. Take out the wallpaper, still I don't need to consult last year's diary.) Apart from pulsating beats — like Vangelis rezzing *Boa Runner* on rain — and great sentences for titles ("I'm Jim, Just Bored So I Was Looking At Your Ventrals (Oh Say Jane!)"), it's nice to have a breakthrough symmetry which isn't about Mother Earth or God's mother, or any kind of Gaele type derivative, as that doesn't use \$500,000 of software to mislead some prime preprogram fantasy. Some kind of award too for the first single to mention the major psychiatric drug Haldol since Swamp Dogs' "Now My Hang Ups (Am Hung Up No More)" (P)

# in brief global

Reviewed by Clive Bell

**Gunvor Hogge** Norway The *Langeleik* occurs occasionally played with a melody and drone technique unchanged since the 15th century, the Norwegian *langeleik* is a fretted box other that produces a hypnotically soothing sound. It is traditionally a woman's instrument, and Gunvor Hogge is one of three *langeleik*-wielding sisters. Apart from a handful of violin solos, the album consists of traditional tunes played simply but delicately on the solo *langeleik*. One sleepy melody mimics a solitary church bell, singing to another bell which hummed off a truck. "My sister is (yng at the bottom of Swedish Lake."

**Femi Kuti** Truth Duet Die sound of *BAKU* 55 150 107 Two fat and cuddly NYC remakes of Femi Kuti, son of the late Fela, on 10" vinyl. Kuti's vocals, brass section and stalling organ sound good over Kemi Chonders' direct Garage beat and sub-heavy bass. On the flipside, *Players At Work* pay their respects to the same tune with an instrumental version. Big wide spaces open up over the beat for several minutes, before Bob Franceschini blazes out a full-on baritone sax solo, while guitarist Michael Cro adds color to the ongoing Kuti Afrobeat exorcism.

**Maral with Martinista Choir** *Seeds* 554 500 000 Bulgarian choirs exist in many countries, including Japan, and here is one from Sydney, Australia, founded by Maria Kiek after returning from her studies in Bulgaria and Turkey. The open-throated female vocal sound is instantly attractive, allied to the emotive whirling chords characteristic of the style. The project here is to place new choir compositions next to jazz pieces with an Eastern European flavour, featuring bouzouki, clarinet and upright bass. Sarian Kazianova's poems, dealing with the pain of migration provide the lyrics. The only problem is that too much album time is given to soft-centred instrumental playing leaving you waiting impatiently for the return of the choir. Strong choral pieces like "The Play" and "Sorrow Suppressed" build up terrifically but are over far too soon and Maral's own voice is featured too little. Still, there's half an album here of a fine choir with a new line in soothing exorcisms.

**Airto Moreira/Various Artists** *Code Brazil* *Target Recife* *MULTI 2000* 890 130 00 Brazil is a vast country and in my atlas Recife in the north-east is well over 1,000

miles from Rio. Percussionist Airto Moreira on a trip to the region, was so impressed by the local talent, he took to the streets, that he took several groups into a local studio to record. The artists range from the wonderful 74-year-old Jose Tavares Da Silva, who plays harmonica as if it was an accordion to a children's project called *Maracatu Nacao*. Here who sing of the kings and queens of Africa who emerged from the slave ships in colonial times. Everything comes with ferocious lashings of percussion. This is not the first time Moreira has produced this kind of collaborative thing — see his excellent African project *Drum 'N' Hustle* (reviewed in *The Wire* 172).

**Loren Nereeli & Dale Strumpell** *Indonesian Soundscapes* *Southern* 500 000 Crank up the central heating, put on a clove-scented cigarette and use this album to transform your sitting room into a Balinese bus station. Or a bustling market, a garden in pouring rain, a gamelan maker's showroom, or a frog choir in a rice field. Make no mistake, these frogs are good, crisply recorded while busy rehearsing their minimalist improvisations. Indonesian Soundscapes is a snapshot from a field recording trip by Loren Nereeli and Dale Strumpell. Stepping back from a tight focus on music, the ear discovers how it is integrated into other activity, whether it's a shadow play for a New Year party, or *Fluick* (using through a Surabaya airport lounge. The general feel is pleasantly ambient, and the brain-shredding racket that is also part of Asian streetlife is kept at arm's length.

**Piccola Orchestra Anon** *Travel* *Oran* 500 000 783 00 The pleasantly light voice of Peppo Senello leads the Italian six-piece Piccola Orchestra through a set of gently jazzy songs, with one eye on a commercial niche for sophisticated contemporary Latin camp. Well done beds, you've already cracked the commercial market with a couple of Volkswagen and Opel ads, and with approval like that, you don't need me. Produced by Arno Lindqvist, who goes for a moody and intimate quality.

**Rizwan-Muazzam Qawwali** *Sacred Fire* *To Love* *Real World* 500 000 783 00 Another album of clanging Islamic devotion, clanging harmoniums, and male voices straining ever higher over a rocking beat that never quits. Qawwali isn't really my cup of Sufism, but I admire the way the singers start on a fierce high and then spend

the next 15 minutes pushing the passion to the limit in a kind of sporting vocal contest. This group is led by the two energetic reshaws of the late Nazrat Fatah Ali Khan and though their sound and technique are not as refined as the master, they do pretty good for singers still in their teens.

**Matt Seattle** *Out Of The Flames* *Dispute* *Dispute* 500 000 783 00 This highly eclectic album on Robert Propp's DGM label is a showcase for Matt Seattle's Border pipes. For those who care about the difference between one bagpipe and another, which I take it, includes all of us, the Border pipes are a smallish bellows-driven item, sounding somewhere between the wild Irish pipes and the sweet, domesticated Northumbrian instrument. Fittingly enough, half the album is devoted to tunes from William Dixon's recently rediscovered manuscript of early 18th century Northumbrian tunes for precisely this instrument. Seattle himself, looking like a sheep farmer who's been left out in the rain, was a rock guitarist in a former life, and is not averse to sprinkling quirky guitar chords over his tunes. Together with producer Stefan Harnig, he has a lot of fun with the arrangements, a bass clonk here, a soul brass and organ section there. So purest hamshirts are optional, then. Yet Seattle is clearly serious about what he's doing. One of the qualities I like in his playing is a slight struggle, a sense of difficulty in the whole enterprise that is quite moving.

**Mustafa Al Sunni** *Songs Of The Syrian Arab Republic* *Dispute* 500 000 783 00 Serving a twofold purpose, this highly accessible collection of Syrian urban popular songs, some classic, some contemporary — showcases the beautifully understated singing of Mustafa Al Sunni, accompanied by some remarkable oud (*Arabic lute*) playing. Familiar chord progressions are sketched in by the dark-toned oud, while its immaculate rhythmic shadings are supported by the lightest of hand drumming. These intimate two-man arrangements are well recorded, and all the lyrics are translated in the liner notes.

**Tom Zé** *Postmodern Photos* *Luaka* *BDP* 500 1 00 As befits the source, Brazilian Tom Zé's 1998 oddball masterpiece *Fabulous Defect*, the mood of these five remakes and one outtake is playful and lightly coloured. The High Llamas, Tobiasz and McIntire and UK's Sotha Free-Jones contribute cool post-rock remixes in pasted shades. Arnon Tadmor (aka Capel, himself originally from Brazil) covers the waterfront from tangatahiti to forward drum in bass. Sean Lennon scorns lightly with the playfully lurked-up version of "O Dinô Do Lago" and even involves the old Daxxaz Ze himself on "dill and newspaper."

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# in brief jazz

Reviewed by Richard Cook

## Jane Ira Bloom *The Road*

Quartet **ABR0505** (A3144 CD)  
Saweborn Bloom's name should have fled: critics' discerning melodies long ago. Will this do it? It is as acute and substantial as her others, and with her latest rhythm section — Fred Hersch, Mark Dresser, Bobby Previte — she might find interest among lost souls who've previously seen as her a mere mainstay. Out at sessions 18 months apart, the music is tough and lean. Ambitious and flawed — a couple of fluffs in her solos stand uncorrected — her improvising on soprano sax is hot, growling and sometimes sensationally merely. Plus, that rhythm section is as great as you'd expect.

## David Ornette Cherry *The End Of A Century* (not released)

Another member of the Cherry family makes his play via a mild late set of popish, worldly grooves. Good sports like Bobby Bradford and various family members are on hand, but frankly this doesn't amount to much at all — and David's melodic playing wouldn't have troubled Augustus Pablo.

## JA Osipov *Out Of Context Live At The Deane Performance Space* (not released)

Tina Turner, Jon Hassell, John Zorn — Osipov has been around. I'm not sure that records are really the way to document him (and that might be why he's done less enough), but posterity may beguile that this pioneer trombonist, flautist, saxophonist and organist has benefited from at least some documentation. I find this set of four longish pieces by three different groups as strong as his live *Advised* set for Vixco, but it has its energetic virtues.

## Bertrand Denzler *Cluster Y* (not released)

The rather murky sound of this Swiss festival recording from Schaffhausen probably suits the rather murky semi-improvised music made by tenor saxophonist Denzler and his quartet, completed by pianist Benoit Delbecq, bassist Helene Labarrière, and Norbert Pfennig on drums. The four of them lumber around the various freedoms between their music's structured biases to spasmodically effective results.

## Eliery Ekolin & Han Bennink *Dissonant Characters* (not released)

Peter Brötzner's bang-up studio sound makes you realize how rarely Bennink has been effectively caught on record. If all those old ICP releases hadn't made the drums sound

so dusty, he might have won rightful recognition a lot earlier. Saxophonist Ekolin is all crackling energy and sharp corners (bassist tempered by structural intuition, whatever it is) of the music just when it threatens to rattle. Han's wry playing is nimble and (ten minutes at a time) tireless, making *Dissonant Characters* the last of a recent spate of tenor-drum records.

## Anders Jormin *Silvius* (not released)

The lead poet on this date is Norwegian artist Marc Ducret, who does guitar with his usual wit but sounds like a glee-aholic at what's otherwise a typical Scandinavian pastel, misinterpreted by Jormin, a thoughtful bassist leader. If it's understated in the European manner, it is also haunting in the way — by now cliché? — accustomed way.

## Eero Koivistoinen *Sometime Ago* (not released)

A ballad collection starring the big-toned Finn, mostly on tenor, played — noted, almost, in the case of a couple of the melodies — with the kind of imitable authority that smooth jazz is gradually eroding away. Eero, winning a million miles away from those imperatives just sounds there and takes his time. Extra applause for Seppo Kärntinen at the piano, a genuine second voice.

## Juël Leandre & Tetsu Saitoh *Juël Et Tetsu* (not released)

The 1996 Yokohama festival meeting between the two bassists might have been a composing event to witness live but it's not much of a record. Tetsu's auxiliary percussion is a distraction, not a bonus, and the sound is too remote when music comes from instruments this intimate and physical, they need to be mixed up very close for it to work. Of course there are absorbing passages, but overall the disc left me cool.

## Mat Maneri Trio *So What?* (not released)

The latest candidate for over-exposure, violinist Maneri makes pungently heavy weather out of four Miles Davis tunes and five of his own. He may lose David's stuff, but by the sound of it he could have just as easily picked four tunes by Francis and the Four Tones. There's not a spot of sweetness in his wain tone, no hint of string player lushness in the delivery and with Matthew Shogels using dark, dark classism underneath it makes for a thunderously bleak landscape.

## Joe McPhee & Jeb Bishop *The Brass City* (not released)

Joe leaves his tenor at home for this one and brings out the cornet, wily-romantic and soprano, the better to deal with Bishop's bone. Track one reminded me of the start of Pink Floyd's "One Of These Days," what with both men blowing anything but notes, and from there — maracas, mutes, chords, and mumbling as quiet as they can get before falling silent — they do whatever they can to evade whatever you expect. Lovable.

## Lisa Michel *When Summer Comes* (not released)

I wish I had more time to give to records like this. Michel's nice New Jersey gig singing works gamely on standards like "A Sweeter Time Than This" and the quartet — including Sam Newsome on soprano, and Brian Blade's drums — play supreme back-to-back, but her soul's in her five organs, which sound like honest toil in the singer-songwriter fields, translated to a jazz setting. A dozen plays might reveal more, as it stands, it just sounds — nice.

## Michel Ratté *Wreck's Progress* (not released)

Recording for Dime, the Montreal constellation of improvising and contemporary music labels that rarely yield their pleasures without a fight, leader Ratté on keyboards, drummer Yves Charu, and Jean-Claude Parry on guitar sign off their stuff under the additional sign of an interminable array on how there's a new approach to live improv. How is Michel's Progress different from all other improv? It's played by three different guys. How is it the same as all other improv? That's the question.

## Jason Rebello *Next Time Round* (not released)

After the eclecticism of his earlier albums, pianist Rebello returns with his most straightforward, unfussy and accomplished record. Not that it's without weaknesses. Gut in New York, the music suffers from Jeff Watts's usual overplaying, and though he puts rocket-assist behind Jason's playing to often valuable effect, it blurs some of the ideas. Mark Turner guest stars on tenor, and he is some head hand Rebello's a talented player but Turner's one of the most powerful figures in the music at present. Too many tracks, also, distract. Yet this is a strong and natural return from a contributor of some distinction.

## Roof *Trace* (not released)

Catfish Tom Cora and Amsterdam anarchyphiles *The Ex* were odd, yet edgy sympathetic sparring partners. Roof continued Cora and *Ex* bassist Luc's partnership in a quartet completed by drummer Michael Wachter and vocalist Phil Minton. Cora's passing leaves unannounced

melancholy to the disc, which is chamber improvising with fragility (rhythms courtesy of Vachor, plus the fine madness of Minton's voice, sometimes like a Black Lullaby gone bonkers, at others a *Stadthausen* spirit-dance with extra spice). The disc is completed by a commentary from European five music's most zealous chronicler, Kevin Whitehead, who seemingly supplies notes for every Euro free music release these days.

## Florian Ross *String For Soprano* (not released)

Sax and String Orchestra Masses, 80:37 CD

What's an expensive luxury like this — sax concerto with full orchestra — doing on a budget jazz label? It's a live recording, bought in and well worth it, sort of. Dave Lefkowitz delivers charming outbursts of sax over unremarkable but undeniably pretty and beguiling writing for the group (composer Ross plays piano too). It occasionally recalls Eliahu Walcott's *The Following Morning*, albeit somewhat weaker.

## Vario 34 *Vario 34—2 Concepts Of Doing* (not released)

This set with Gunter Christmann retreads the grand old age of Improv. Paul Lovens lies on with him but the others are comparative newcomers, among them frontline troublemaker Mats Gustafsson. On analogue spin, Thomas Lehn adds a commentary of whistles that recalls Harold Bay on Records. There are tiny dissonances (reversed and rummaged) and a host of fine moments.

## Biggi Vinkele *Slowdrags And Interludes* (not released)

Saweborn Vinkele documents her meeting with Peter Kowald (bass) and Peter Uskyla (drums) in 19 small episodes spread across barely an hour of music. Vinkele is an virtuoso on alto, patiently setting out motifs and phrase pieces as if figuring out how they might fit together as she goes along, while the other two curb any temptation to overlay. All 19 theories are written, or at least improvised off what's presumably a specific plan, so the results are crafted without seeming studied.

## Stich Wynston's Modern Surfaces with Paul Blery

Stich Wynston's Modern Surfaces With Special Guest Paul Blery **su2** (not released)

Such is mainly drums. Geoff Young is on guitar, Mike Murley does sax — and there's a lot of Mike Blery, sitting in at the keyboard and curiously turning this into his record. The Surfaces play the kind of jazz he likes anyway, all stop-go games, gliding spaces, pregnant harmonies, sudden flumes emerging from lyrical rests. But when you get to the piano solo at track ten, "Porta," all the live work up to that point seems like a prelude to five minutes 25 seconds of Blery genius. □

# in brief outer limits

Reviewed by David Keenan

## Aranos Making Love In Small Spaces

Aranos, grew up in Bohemia in the Czech Republic, performing in dissonant theatre groups before fleeing to the West after the Russian invasion. Since then he's wandered Europe, gardening, teaching yoga and bottling booze, and most recently he turned up on the County Clare doorstep of Steve Stapleton of Nurse With Wound. The meeting resulted in their sublime *Acts Of Senseless Beauty* collaboration. A multi-instrumentalist, Aranos played violin on that record, but here he also plays double bass, drums, guitar and piano. On *Making Love In Small Spaces* he draws on the political cabaret tradition: he grew up with, which unfortunately means the sounds like he's mugging his way through a collection of fascist folk tunes. His violin still sounds fantastic, however, at times recalling the heavyhearted emotional clunk of *Bad Seed/Dirty Thirteen* member Warren Ellis, but elsewhere the going is as tough as a bagger.

## Leif Elggren & Thomas

*Leif Elggren & Thomas* ZZZ 9 11 1 (REDEMPTION RECORDS) CD

During 1995-96, Swedish conceptual artists Elggren and Ljénberg sent out some 200 letters to prominent people worldwide,

accusing them of stealing ideas from their unconscious dream life. Each letter demanded financial compensation. The correspondence was later published as a book, *Experiment With Dreams*, while the companion CD, *ZZZ 9 11 1*, promises to develop their idea. However, the sound of two andirons lighting themselves silly for 64 minutes might pass muster as the evolution of an idea in some circles, but as a listening

experience it comes over like a honey trap for an area of conceptual art criticism so terrified of not getting it or putting a foot wrong that it usually ends up with its foot in its mouth. All you have to remember is some concepts are worth thinking about and others aren't worth shit; and you don't have to be as keen to tell the difference. Elggren's solo disc, for mental beat and brains is equally dull and joylessly executed.

## Hochenkott I Love You

*Hochenkott I Love You* 4040000 8000000 CD

You can always rely on the Oregon label RoadCore to match quality songs and shoddy packaging. Unsurprisingly, then, that Hochenkott's first CD looks a shambles, but don't flush it just yet. Featuring two members of Portland's late, lamented living Klaw Trio, Hochenkott plays stoner folk in the grand tradition, where sparse ethnic instrumentation and vintage electronics are processed through FX tunnels. From acoustic pieces that sound like a kitsch Eastern take on John Fahey, through ascendant krautrock and raucous electronic pieces, *I Love You* is yet another thrilling chapter of devotional and free improvisation. Some great washes of reverb might have given the whole a little psychedelic depth — as points Hochenkott sound a bit flat and uptight — but it's not like I'm groaning.

## Toshiaki Ishizuka In The Night

*Toshiaki Ishizuka In The Night* 90 910107 CD

Ishizuka is the phenomenal drummer who fires up Kay Hano and Kan Hkuma's Tokyo trio *Vigia*. Here on *In The Night*, he goes it alone. Notoriously, solo drum records only attract the interest of severely lonely drummers, which is a shame, because they're not really all that daunting. Approaching one requires a subtle reprogramming of the ear

You have to resist its natural inclination to listen out for rhythmic logic, and instead train it to focus on the tone released with each stroke of the kit. A beautifully detailed recording such as the obviously promotes some concentration. Like free jazz legend Milford Graves, whose *Grand Unkzation* CD on Tzadik is a benchmark release for solo drum sets, Ishizuka whips up an insane breeze as he tails the skins, cymbals resonate in slow motion for long minutes after being struck, and he slowly scrapes drum surfaces to set some wails howling at the moon.

## Lost In Translation Domestic

*Lost In Translation Domestic* 4040000 8000000 CD

*Lost In Translation* is a jazz Krause, whose normal calling card is a frenzied mess of breakbeats and failing electronics. This time out, however, he is curtailed by the standard Memo brief of austere electronic minimalism. Still, *Domestic* flies in faster than the average Memo release. Sometimes the album comes over like a special Sound of AMPP on synths. Elsewhere, the source of telephone wires caught in a breeze mounted with close-mixed recordings of power generators, induce late-night psychosis. But Memo's characteristically insisterly way with information means you have to guess the disc's sound sources. If the album title is a clue and not a red herring then they are probably taken from Krause's favourite household appliances. What a wag.

## David Maranhã Piano

*David Maranhã Piano* 4040000 8000000 CD

Ever since American composer Henry Cowell first employed a bag of screws into a piano, it has become de rigueur for cheapjack avant-gardists to 'treat' instruments with lowly household objects in pursuit of that wild elusive sound. But David Maranhã's application of four motors and wain bow to a piano is motivated less by a desire for novelty than the internal urges of his music. After a tentative opening consisting of damp harmonic scrapes, the piano takes off like a single-engined jet aircraft when Maranhã kickstarts his four-motored piano effect and

then starts to tease single notes from the bubbling background with his bow. This is a great and physically affecting wall of sound, where the slightest tremor of shift causes peacocks plates to groan. It's a great treat for fans of *Maranhã* Archer. Arnold Drysdale and — perhaps Maranhã's major influence — Phil Noyes.

## Solid Eye Fruita Of Automation

*Solid Eye Fruita Of Automation* 4040000 8000000 CD

*Solid Eye Fruita Of Automation* 4040000 8000000 CD. Solid Eye features Rick Potts, formerly of Los Angeles Free Music Society's home electronic outfit *Le Fonti Four* and *Arseway*. Here he is joined in his abuse of household objects and cheap synth sounds by amateur radio hobbyist Joseph Hemmer and Steve Thomsen. At times, their manic electro excursion's sound like they are being played by an orchestra of anarchic wind-up toys suddenly blessed with free will. The live album, however, is much closer in spirit to the original LAFMS, with plenty of low level screeching and plucking.

## The Sons Of God The Object

*The Sons Of God The Object* 4040000 8000000 CD

Tattooed with the motto 'Inel strength and courage', Swedish Non-starians *Sons Of God* claim this concept piece is rooted in US Cold War experiments to crack the sound encoded in the grooves of ancient pots and the penitents of the Old Masters. To decode them, thereby opening communications links with history, the Sons had to devise a special record player' out of a large iron diaphragm and some parabolic Swedish Army telephone parts. Thus prepared they entered an abandoned East German workshop — the 'Object' of the title — to pick up the past's messages. And here they are coming through loud and clear, cleverly coded in cooing noises and bursts of static. Obviously the Swedish underground has discovered a market niche for pseudo-scientific conceptual art listeners and are working overtime to plug it with sonically unimpaired CDs dressed up as desirable art objects.

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# print run

New music books: read, raved about, roughed up



## High Art: A History Of The Psychedelic Poster

Edited by Ted Owens and Denise Duckson

SANCTUARY PINK £20

Just as the likes of Keith Haring and Jean Paul Bissonnet made spraycan graffiti a legitimate art form in the 1980s, so the once disposable psychedelic posters of the 1960s are now making it into the permanent collections of New York's Museum of Modern Art and London's V&A. Ted Owens and Denise Duckson's *High Art*, the latest in a long line of poster books, charts their promotion from headshop artefacts to auction-room items, prized by pop millionaires. Both an 'entertainment specialist' at a well-known London auction house and a seasoned



collector himself, Owens's personal collection, now sold, illustrates the bulk of the book. Although supplemented with concise and useful essays on the various artists, promoters and venues of the era by Walter D'Arcy, together with a handy guide to collecting posters from Alan Caplan, much of *High Art's* brief history lesson has already been discussed more fully in Paul D. Gershon's definitive *The Art Of Rock*. Regardless, the visuals tell their own mind-altering history of the time before they were — somewhat ironically — archived between sheets of acid-free paper. Primarily designed to advertise rock shows, they clamoured for attention by using hip imagery, clashing colour schemes and hand-drawn liquid typography they served as both territorial marker and

**Left: Explosion, Martin Sharp's 1967 poster of Jimi Hendrix. Above: posters by Hapshash And The Coloured Coat (top) and Nick Griffin**



secret language system, which only the true 'treks' could decipher. The artists and designers who created them have since become as famous as the musicians they were working for. Stanley Mouse, Alton Kelly and Aoommoo and Rock Griffin remain inextricably linked to The Grateful Dead, while Detroit artist Gary Grimshaw's harder-edged designs for The MC5 and other 60s high-energy rockers packing Russ Gibbo's Grande Ballroom concerts in Detroit are almost iconic in stature.

In Britain, meanwhile, artists and designers were developing a confident style all their own. Collectives such as The Fool and Hapshash And The Coloured Coat (the latter emerging from producer Joe Boyd's Oasis Visions outlet) evoked perfectly the more challenging underground circuits of Swinging London. By using fluorescent and metallic inks (sometimes on foil paper) the British poster artists created a look that twinned Aubrey Beardsley decadence with Andy Warhol pop. One of the best of the London underground artists was Australian-born Martin Sharp whose bubbling ink drawings appeared regularly in *Q* magazine. He was also responsible for the now classic cover designs for Cream's *Disraeli Gears* and *Wheels Of Fire*, and an exploding psychedelic portrait of Hendrix — based on a Linda McCartney photograph — which reveals exactly how it must have felt (and sounded) to be in the presence of the guitarist, as he lit fly in a roomful of erasing projected light.

The British section of *High Art* proves to be the most illuminating. It includes more postcard biographies of the main artists, and for those in search of these now rare artefacts, an Oasis Visions Series checklist by 60s archivist John Platt. Indeed, as it becomes obvious that this is where the authors' real interest lies, it makes you yearn for a more detailed book on British psychedelic posters, rather than yet another



Patti Smith, 1975, and below, doing her famous Dylan impression, 1971

treatise based largely on their American counterparts. The section shudders to a halt with a badly cropped John Lennon portrait by artbrush supremo Alan Aldridge (the man behind *Lenny* and other horrors) the cover for *Blowin' Glass*. Aldridge's happy-kidish style is a bad comedown from the experience of Sharp's gaudy ink line and Michael English's pulsating paper-light shows.

Yet the book's real conclusion is somewhat worse, as it frantically tries to impress upon the reader that the art of the psychedelic poster lives on in the shape of such 'New Wave' artists as Mark Arminio, Frank Kozik and Coop — all fully paid up members of the Robert Williams/Ed 'Big Daddy' Roth inspired Kalfornian Kustom Kulture movement. None of these producers work that is remotely high or psychedelic in the true sense and their inclusion rudely upends the balance of the book. However, the truly great psychedelic posters — many of them reprinted here have an aura of timelessness that only context with direct sourcing could possibly fade.

EDWIN POWNCEY

## Patti Smith Complete: Lyrics, Notes And Reflections

By Patti Smith  
BLOOMSBURY HBK £20

"The pursuit of style has always been a spirited part of the work process," writes Patti Smith. "Images that inform the work or the movement of the work. Buckle's crew

(live: Chris's carless ponytail. A Hancock d.o. Cinus. Bob Dylan's snap hat).

Presenting a precise eye for detail as a calling card, Patti Smith announced herself as the dandy dandy of the New York pre-punk underground, 20 years on. Patti Smith Complete is her handsomely mounted self-portrait. Dowsing her collected songbooks and somnolently written yet illuminating notes with souvenirs of style, fetish objects, family album memories, road pictures and photo sessions by, among others, Anne LaBowitz and Smith's onetime room mate Robert Mapplethorpe, the book documents the dandy's gradual transformation into the singer/haute couture of today, composing songs as spells to ease time's passing. Common to Smith then and now is a belief in the magic potential of music. On her early records, her songs followed the listener inside intoxicated word-clouds and crackling electricity. If the rustling, roadside narratives of her 1975 debut *Horses* benefit most from the transfer to the pages some of her later, seemingly plainer creations, when printed as texts, are sufficiently well crafted to retain much of their mesmerizing power.

However, a book of lyrics and photographs is at heart a dandy undertaking, and is therefore most fascinating as a portrait of the artist as a dandy, namely a rare male preserve for flamboyant social display. But Smith was never going to concede all the fun roles to the boys. She wasn't the only one taking ribbons of words and guitar leads round New York's dems rooms. Her soul brothers Tom Verlaine and Richard Hell had also convincingly updated Buckle and Rimbaud's hallucinatory legacy

of baroque spleen and decadence over amplified guitars. But their dandyism wasn't an absolute necessity, not like Patti Smith's. Already at a disadvantage because of her sex, her dandyism was her way of securing herself a footing, guaranteeing her greater social mobility. When *Horses* was first released, most everyone outside New York first encountered her via Robert Mapplethorpe's now iconic cover portrait, reproduced in ads for the record, before they heard the music itself. Even as an isolated image, a raw sensuality seeps through the Season's New York bachelor cool look. Focusing her sexuality through her handsome, androgynous appearance, Smith's capacity for unsettling male certainties could be measured in the hostile, her image was capable of provoking. No wonder she resorted to male dandy wiles to get her work done. Smith cut her dandy persona not from cloth but from a personal library of icons and inspirations: poets, painters and musicians, scattered through the book (they constitute a familiar yet private list of Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Gertrude, Burroughs, Ginsberg, Hendrix, Richard Day etc.) In Baudelaire's formulation, dandyism was "the last shimmer of the heroic in times of decadence" — a perfect evocation of the music Patti Smith makes at her dandy best.

BRIAN KOPPEL



## Gramophone, Film, Typewriter

By Friedrich A. Kliner

STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS HBK £12.95

## Sound Revelations: A Biography Of Fred Gaisberg, Founding Father Of Commercial Sound Recording

By Jerrold Northrop Moore  
SANDYBURY MUSIC LIBRARY HBK £12.99

When Thomas Edison first screamed "Hello!" into the machine, expectant marketplace of what he would later call his "photography" in July 1877, an epistemological shift of seismic

proportions took place. The printed word was effectively deprived of its preeminence as the transcriber and shaper of human thought. Before even the faintest echo of a tune had registered upon a rotating cylinder, an entire culture lost its mind. The possibility of new communication technologies had come into existence which were not obliged to operate through the medium of symbols, but could store the physical traces of the world as sound waves and light. Writing in very different styles and from vastly differing perspectives, Kliner and Moore have both, in their respective fashions, rescripted a history that could only begin once the placing of words upon a page was no longer a privileged means of expression. Friedrich Kliner is Professor of Aesthetics and Media Studies at the Institute for Aesthetics and Cultural Studies at Humboldt University, Berlin — but don't let that put you off. His contributions, however indirectly made to such recent publications as *Die Gesellen* Verlag's patchy exploration of techno, icons — *Looslove* 1-3 and Ulf Poschardt's *Topical* CD Culture, greatly enriched what were otherwise two rather dubious intellectual exercises. Whatever doubts he might owe Foucault, Lacan and Derrida, Kliner has managed to repay them with a fine wit, some subtle insights and a genuine feel for the poetry of events. Jerrold Northrop Moore, by comparison may seem a more unassuming figure. He underplays himself, however, the more forcefully to exploit his material. An expert on Edward Elgar and a former curator of early sound recordings at Yale University, he has come into extreme proximity with the stacks of discs, news and cars that form in Kliner's view, an indispensable critique to the written archive that constitute the basis for Foucault's *Archaeology Of Knowledge*. Originally published in 1973 and available now in a heavily revised and illustrated edition, Moore's scrupulous exerting and contextualising of the extensive journals and autobiographical writings of the sound recording pioneer Fred Gaisberg, surely a solid foundation for some of Kliner's more ambitious analytical structures.

Gramophone, Film, Typewriter has the exception of noise at its core. The earliest known analogue recordings were so unselective in what they picked up that they mechanically registered their own existence. For Kliner, this was an information boom to all-embracing that generals and poets, psychiatrists and shopgirls became caught up in it. His witness to history include some unlikely individuals. Rife describes his visit to see a phonograph recorded down upon the coronal lute of a woman still to discover what kind of music might be produced. Copy thief Fricke Bauer receives a note from her fiancé, Franz Kafka describing the labyrinthine possibility of a relationship between two phonographs located in separate cities but able to communicate with each other by telephone. In Brian Staker's *Discworld*, Dr. Seward uses a dictaphone to record details of a mental patient's anguish as he awaits the arrival of his master, while Sigmund Freud in Vienna



expresses his extreme abhorrence at the notion of his efforts being permitted to do such a thing. A pace of radicalistic sonic forays dating from 1916 concerns a young German engineer's attempts to woo a young woman by using a phonically modified photograph to conjure up the actual sound of Goethe's voice from the empty air. His first utterance is a sprightly infusion of flute; Newton's continuous colour spectrum.

So much for the past. Kitarler is keenly aware of how cultural and military strategies inevitably become entwined, even after Ernte Berliner's great invention: the gramophone record was generally acknowledged as the preserve of musicians and composers. When Karlheinz Stockhausen was mixing his first electronic composition *Kontakte* in the Cologne studio of the Westdeutscher Rundfunk between February 1958 and the fall of 1959, he observes "the pulse generator indicating another band-pass filter, as well as the sine and square wave oscillators were made up of procured US Army equipment; an abuse that produced a distinctive sound." Kitarler also notes the vocoder's fabulous origins as an encryption device designed by Alan Turing, which enabled Churchill to communicate with the other representatives of the Four Powers. Can "Spooky: The Magic Piano" ever seem innocent to our ears again?

Kitarler dazes throughout and only rarely resorts to mystification in order to get his point across. He's also unafraid of letting his readers figure things out for themselves: his history of recorded sound as a displacement for printed texts ends with the published score for Jimi Hendrix's "And The Gods Fade Love," the praised electronic use of manipulated tape effects and voices that opens *Electric Landings*. The single enigmatic statue, listing jet whistle, backward speech and harmonics "ramp up and down at high speeds," is presented

with only the briefest of commentaries. To do any more might spoil the disk. Edison's cylinder recorder had long since been reduced to museum-piece status, and flat, rotating discs seemed the Berliner prototype were all the rage. "Berliner's gramophone is to the history of music," Kitarler asserts, "what Edison's photograph is to the history of literature."

What links the one most closely to the other however is the human voice, as is made clear in *Sound Revolutions*. Moore's admirable biography of Fritz Giesberg who began his career in 1889 at the age of 16 playing piano accompaniments to an assortment of leather-lunged performers, happy to bellow, shriek and whine their brains out for the Columbia Phonograph Company of Washington. Giesberg also had a great ear for volume, securing the booming hiss announcer of train departures at Potomac Railway Station, and a year he travelled on a train between Baltimore and Washington, selling magazines and sweets in a voice that was audible "above the noise of the locomotive." By then, Giesberg was working for Berliner's Gramophone Company and would soon be on his first trip to London to establish a European market for what was still considered a fad and a novelty.

Giesberg was happy to record anything from Russian Gypsies to George Moberg performing his *Invention Of Railway Trains On The Safe Drum*. But it was not until he managed to interest the world of opera in the possibilities of recording that the gramophone really made itself felt as a musical presence. Giesberg paid Caruso's enormous fee out of his own pocket for the privilege of capturing his voice on disc. The investment quickly paid off in the wake of that prestigious name came such opera stars as Melba, Gounon and Patti. While charade-makers their singers' response to the new medium as their delight and

amazement in hearing the sound of their own voices for the first time. The great Patti, then 63, blew ecstatic kisses at the gramophone. "Ah! 'Mon Dieu' she thrilled. 'Marianne' comprehends pourquo je suis Patti!" ("My God, now I understand why I am Patti!") By the time Giesberg recorded Piedpiper playing the piano at his home in Switzerland, that started sense of self-discovery was coming to an end. Besides, it's the human voice that resonates most clearly inside our heads. Patti's skull had finally yielded up its secret.

KEN HOLLINGS

## House: The Rough Guide

By Sean Redder

ROUGH GUIDES PRG 15 99

## Drum 'N' Bass: The Rough Guide

By Peter Shapiro

ROUGH GUIDES PRG 15 99

The publishing world is currently in love with the small format book, and these chunky little encyclopaedias are certainly objects of desire. Soapy smooth covers, hefty design & layout, a comprehensive compendium — and a lot, between a paper-back novel and a pocket dictionary, that's really concealed should you accidentally take them clubbing. So who are they for? Well, *Rough Guides* are for tourists, and anyone who's less than a fluent native speaker of BBox90s dance music ought can flip through for. Missing information as they stand disorientated on the exotic street corners of the House nation or the drum 'n' bass village. With each, what you get is a very brief introductory essay followed by almost 200 alphabetically listed articles on artists or labels, from A Guy Called Gerald to Kevin Yost (House), and from DJ Zinc to e.g. A Guy Called Gerald (Drum 'N' Bass). Each entry concludes with a recommended record. So in the case of Gerald: the House guide picks "Voodoo Ray" as the "definitive Brit Acid House track", while Drum 'N' Bass names Black Saint Technology as "the most startling of drum 'n' bass single-artist albums".

Coming at the end of a decade in which anyone fool enough to want to know who was doing what on a record was slapped down as a *trainspotter*, there is something fabulously uncouth about an encyclopaedia of House or drum 'n' bass. The dance music scene has its share of obfuscation and in-crowd self-congratulation and much of its charm resides in its slobbery — you either know or you're nobody. The best drum 'n' bass I ever heard was on pirate radio in the early 90s, and no DJ would have dreamt of dictating who or what these records were. Little record stores spring up, apparently with a stock of a mere dozen records, and vanished again overnight. I went in and asked for something specific. A Guy Called Gerald, in fact — the reply came back, "Oh no, you'll have to try *Piedpiper*." Another shop would hardly let me in the door. What

sort of music do you sell? "Nothing that would interest you mate." Do you have any *Intelligent Jungle*? "No, that scene's finished." As an ignorant tourist I was exiled by this snobbery as though I'd been refused tickets at Covent Garden; couldn't I catch *Tall Popo* from Pagetta? All those blank white label 12s and anal-axes are part of fun, after about 20 years of dance music maybe it's a good job someone's finally sorted the alphabet. It's an alphabetical order — it's all part of the scene's, ahem, maturity. The current *Acidcore* TV series is also full of affluent dance producers casting a hearty eye back over two decades of successful business.

These guides are written in a ludo style, though Peter Shapiro's *Drum 'N' Bass* has a cheekier character. Shapiro's writing is witty and colourful, and he's not afraid to be insulting, especially about "smart-alecs" like *Squarepusher*. In fact my favourite artists — *Squarepusher*, *Wagon Christ* and *Money Mark* — come in for some bruising treatment. But at least they're here, for some reason Aphex Twin doesn't make it.

Shapiro's highly readable volume deals with Big Beat and TripHop as well as drum 'n' bass, and a more UK-oriented than the House guide it rivals. DJ Food and Mr Scruff lurk shoulder, with Fabio and Groove Rider. House is more of a team effort, with Shapiro heading again, alongside 12 other contributors, under the leadership of Sean Baker. Problems are few in these two solid volumes, but here they are: all prose goes uncaptioned, the lack of indexes means if you want to look up Louie Vega, you won't find him unless you know he's half of Musicals At Work. Indeed, all dance music's aliases are crying out for an index — though he works at Dr. Rocks, Westminster and Radio Bay, (Hart) Herbert is only listed in *House* under the name he was born with. A historical overview would have been useful. And technical information is minimal, but publishers always seem scared that anything small will put readers off. If you don't know what is meant by the "Amber" break (from The House "Amber Brother", first sampled by LJJ Bismont on "Music"), or the "Acidcore" break, taken from The Incredible Bongo Band's version of "Apache", these volumes won't help you much, although *Drum 'N' Bass* fleetingly explains them in its breakdown section, before referencing them again and again. Indeed, the miscellaneat attempts at musical definition are these guides' most bewildering feature. "House" can be widely defined as electronic music with a rhythm set in a 4-4 tempo; the breakdown is now generally defined as almost any rhythm that is not in 4/4 tempo. Surely some mistake here? It reminds me of the current habit of describing an out of rhythm thumble as "out of time". Much better as Shapiro's *Drum 'N' Bass* the *juke-jazz* album *Angie N' Vee's* the Saturday morning cartoon version of Karlheinz Stockhausen. And Bernard's "R&B" was "a firm favourite with the lighter fluid crowd".

CLIVE BELL

## A Boy Called Mary: Kris Kirk's Greatest Hits

By Kris Kirk

PHILADELPHIA'S PHIL 150

Kris Kirk, who died in 1993, was never one of the big names of music journalism. He nosed into being more than a few different publications (*Melody Maker*, *Gay Times*, *The Face*, *Cue*) and he never played the games of genre invention or trend fabrication that many writers use as cloaks for self-publicity. Yet his collection, lovingly compiled by Kirk's spiritual heir Richard Smith, proves that the body of work Kirk left behind has enormous resonance. Kirk was an openly gay critic in a business awash with evasive closet cases and straight boys coloring queer tastes a simple but profound fact which ensured that his criticism always came wrapped in the urgency of political intervention.

That somewhat pompous formulation runs the risk of making Kirk sound like a ranting demagogue, when he was anything but. Indeed the lightness of touch with which he wrote may be another reason why he was always undervalued. The interviews, reviews and reflections collected in *A Boy Called Mary* (his Catholic parents unwittingly nicknamed his lifelong love affair with camp by making that one of his middle names) sparkle with felicitous asides and stylish wit. Like all reviewers he entertained, but he always knew that popular culture was an ideological battlefield so he offered — like the best of the acts he wrote about — entertainment with an edge tinged with tact.

In many ways, this is a book about the 80s, since the bulk of Kirk's writing coincided with that decade's huge but ambivalent boom in pop's gay/camp pop. All these adjectives are right, but not always at the same time or for the same reasons. The confluence of his boy-scoutish politics with the emerging loss of Pinky, Bronski Beat and The Pet Shop Boys make for fascinating and historic reading, but he wasn't only interested in those involved in penning the Top Ten. Stung alongside the pieces on those acts are encounters with artists who moved from a pop starting point towards less mainstream zones (Marc Almond, Manannan Faithfull) and fell further offshore from the pop coastline: the likes of Diamanda Galas, Morris and the musically and sexually hardcore dance collective Tongvaquian. Kirk also traced the half-buried histories of queer music, setting Little Richard and The Kinks in their properly deviant context, interviewing Brian Epstein's boyfriend (who had been homophobia written out of Epstein's official biography), conducting a gently definitive interview with Devo. Yes, sadly without his Sex-O-Lettes.

It all makes for an exceptional book, a suitable testament to Kirk's quiet radicalism, sharp writing and inflexible taste. It's also impeccable evidence in the case that all categorizations are inherently political. Most fans of the pop acts Kirk analysed might have

found the noses hurting out of Diamanda Galas too unacceptably strange and demanding, but Kirk felt that a tradition of forbidding avant-garde was not the only place to locate her. For him, she's one response among many to sexual conservatism, and setting aside the limited grid of aesthetics, he implicitly argues that Galas's work makes just as much sense as part of a cross-gender spectrum that also encompasses the cheese yearning hi-NRG of Hazel Dean and the flaring, unfairly derided of Johnnie Ray. All this, whatever their enormous social differences and relative aesthetic merits, are blows struck against the smothering regimes of sexual normality.

In other words, if you draw the map of music politically rather than just formally, different configurations begin to emerge. Kirk was interested in how things sound, but refused to divorce them from what they mean, and he knew that those meanings are indelibly shaped by who you are and where you place yourself. He showed time and again that objectivity is a myth and apolitical criticism the most dangerous of oxymorons. *A Boy Called Mary* is a fabulous advertisement for an unabashedly partisan approach.

ANDY HAMILTON



Camp attendee: Diamanda Galas

## New World Symphonies: How American Culture Changed European Music

By Jack Sullivan

YOUTUBE.COM/REVIEWS/1555120

"American music seems to require a foreign accent to carry authority in American culture," writes Jack Sullivan, but "as far as the actual composers are concerned... it is America that carries the authority, occupying an importance in musical culture similar to what the Austro-Germanic empire once enjoyed." If the standard picture of American classical music seen dominated by European models, Sullivan asserts the converse is true by tracing the influence of American literature and music, and indeed the American myth, on European composers. He names those who submitted to those

influences (*New World Symphonies*), after Dvorak's *Symphony From The New World*.

This is an interesting theme, and ought to make a good book. But Sullivan's main argument lacks focus, and because of his rather superficial understanding of much of the music, he makes rather too much appeal to the authority of other writers.

Sullivan is a college professor of English and his enthusiasm for music is admirable. But still, I'm reminded of the English Literature crowd trying to set themselves up as all-purpose cultural commentators. However, he turns up a lot of interesting material. Two of the best chapters are those on Dvorak and Delius, and on "Hawaiiwa Fella" The Dvorak episode has passed into folklore, just as the horn theme from the slow movement of his *New World Symphony* has become a "spiral" in its own right, reified "Gauri Gauri," as Sullivan says. Dvorak borrowed from black music and gave back to it in equal measure. In 1992 he began a three-year stay in America as director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York. He told the press that the negro melodies "must be the real foundation of any serious and original school of composition to be developed in the United States." This famous pronouncement astonished white opinion — but then, Dvorak did make it a decade before the publication of the first manifesto on black folk music, *The Souls Of Black Folks* by WEB Dubois.

As Sullivan argues, Dvorak composed only in the spirit of black and Indian music. "I have not actually used any of the melodies. I have simply written original themes embodying the peculiarities of the music," the composer explained. Sullivan defends Dvorak against Richard Taniguchi's charge that he developed an "ethnic" nationalism that led to the "regrettable white-brother-of-the-grain idiom" of Aaron Copland, a "life-leaving homocultural Jew from Brooklyn." Isome is only this, Sullivan?

Sullivan includes a rather unconvincing chapter on Edgar Allan Poe as the most decisive influence on Debussy and Ravel, and one on the musical legacy of Walt Whitman. But having set up an argument, he can't always

demonstrate the essential Americanness of the writers he discusses. More simply, there's an interesting discussion of Varèse, and Sullivan is on firmer ground in his chapter on Broadway and Hollywood. I love Otto Klemperer's wisest comment about the once classical film composer Erich Korngold, who had "always composed for Warner Brothers, he just didn't realise it." Schoenberg in Hollywood was always good for a laugh, living Thaberg offered the modernist master \$25,000 to score *The Good Earth*. When Schoenberg finally arrived at Thaberg's office, after getting lost in an MGM studio tour that he thought was part of the interview, he insisted on complete control of all sound, including dialogue — the actors would have to declaim their lines in the manner of *Amor Lululu*. Thaberg couldn't believe he was serious, but conceded the deal after Schoenberg doubled the fee to \$50,000.

Sullivan has little time for those American modernist composers who moved to Europe for their models. He writes, "The Milton Babbitt school officially renounced the idea of an audience altogether," making explicit what was already, he believes, the practice among American academic composers anyway. These repeated sidescapes at alienating — a uniform morass of audience indifference, in Sullivan's picture — and Theodor Adorno, become irritating. Sullivan doesn't see how Adorno's critique of the culture industry survives his ill-informed analysis of popular music. Well, OK, there is a problem with some of the music Sullivan despises, but his preferred alternative is the land of floppy, gutless writing found in the Concerto For Soprano Saxophone by film composer Stanley Myers, ludicrously described here as showing "the rich possibilities of symphonic jazz at the end of the century." Maybe he is pissed off with the arts and afflictions of European intellectuals, but in attempting to prove his thesis about the American influence on European music, Sullivan's constant urge to downplay and denude European modernist influences coming the other way leaves a sour taste.

ANDY HAMILTON



Milton Babbitt: no audience necessary

# multi media

Frances Morgan generates chaotic music at **Strange Attraction**



The simplicity of much interactive art is a testament to the understanding that the user is an unknown quantity. One of the dangers inherent in presenting interactive music in a public setting is that the meaning and possibilities of a piece can be obtained by complicated methods of execution, and the visitor's role in the interactive process, instead of the pivotal one it should be, can easily get lost among the whistles and bells. Many of the exhibits at *Strange Attraction*, a collection of invented musical instruments and interfaces that ran for a week in July at South London's Morley College Gallery, depended upon and played with the possibilities of advanced technologies, but there was a sense throughout of both a historical perspective and a search for a deeper experience than the novelty value of being able to play with some new toys.

In order to ensure that a piece is accessible to all, an interface needs to be as welcoming and unthreatening as possible. Romondson's *Precision With Buttons* invited participants to press three large buttons, which triggered off recordings of patterns played on a thumb piano. At the same time, a projection of shifting blue shapes created a hypnotic visual counterpart which settled relatively quickly into a calming sequence of music and color. Romondson's Andrew Allanson, a member of the digital design team *Animators*, described the effect as "a common theme of stasis and change", a description which he felt summed up the other works in the exhibition. Although this was one of the more obviously interactive pieces, it was surprising how quickly you started wanting to interact with it, and stopped to appreciate how well it worked when left alone.

Because *Precision With Buttons* seemed quite happy to hang around on its own, without much extra input from visitors, it had

more in common with the thought-provoking music exhibits. John Eccart, the composer who has worked with Louis Lussier and Gekko, has more recently been exploring ways of making music that replicates the rhythms of bees, snons, fluid mathematics, and even the distribution of goals on a football field in the football season. His *Beginning* is an exploration of the sonic possibilities of the solar system and its planetary movements. A computerized model of the solar system serves as the basis for users to observe the movements of the planets, and to hear them, converting their constant cycles into a sonic analogue: a new music of the spheres. "In generative music, you have to find something which is rich enough, which happens naturally," Eccart explains. "In this case, it's constantly changing system that never repeats itself." Some generative musics use "pure" algorithmic processes to create sonic material, as represented at *Strange Attraction* by Ross Corbett's *Symphony*; but Eccart's work is anchored to naturally occurring phenomena. It's an example of environmental structures used to great effect in conjunction with advanced technological processes. Clement's piece, although achieved using very different methods, was equally engaging; although once again, there was little physical interaction required on the part of the user. This "non-human" music, generated from simple algorithms tweaked by randomizing agents, represented a fascinating mixture of logic and unfamiliarity, like hearing a new language that you feel you ought to understand but don't.

If interactive art's purpose is to encourage creative activity, then the use of familiar imagery, such as household objects (rather than the blank face of cold metal), could be crucial. Dominic Robson's *Piano Jars*, in which music is created by moving light-sensitive jars

filled with golden syrup and linked to a computer, was an attractive piece because of its familiar components. The jars themselves were inviting to hold, and the physical movements required to "play" them were more satisfying for not being based around a keyboard or mouse. The interface emerged from Robson's desire to "get away from various tools, work tools", because as he puts it, "a computer sets a reference point and was a context". *Piano Jars* was the most "interactive" piece on display: it made no sound unless you physically touched and shook it, and the degree of control over the music's pitch and speed, as well as triggering its start and end, meant it went some way towards achieving Robson's aim of creating a context for music that balances the input of both "composer" and player.

The exhibition's combination of interactive and generative work made you examine your own role as visitor, audience member and "consumer", as your relationship with each piece was fundamentally different. Max Eastley has been experimenting with generative approaches for decades. His sound sculpture titled *Bombardier Cockles* required the visitor to simply walk and listen as a revolving, motor-driven arm holding a slider of bamboo struck other bamboo pieces as it completed circles, yet it was just as "inviting" as if you had been required to make an interactive gesture. With so much electronic material in the exhibition, the acoustic sound was refreshing, and in Eastley's other piece, which used miniature car radios, very subtle.

When sound art is placed in a gallery setting, we are directed to the visual element to the work that is strong on design and easy to engage with quickly, because of the amount of time we spend there and the way we move around galleries. The non-linear music of *Strange Attraction* reflected this and effectively made use of it, yet it is interesting to imagine how such pieces would work with a very different effect outside the conventional art space. It's impossible to imagine, for example, the syrup jars having any conceivable use



outside of an exhibition such as this. In contrast, Max Eastley's sculptures, although they seem the most delicate and impractical of the lot, have been put to excellent regular use in live work and studio recordings (with David Toop, Paul Schuler and many others).

There currently seems to be a thirst to explore new environments for audio and visual work, as underlined by the recent on-line *Senseless* discussion about the possibilities of presenting sound art and installations within a club-type space. *Strange Attraction* made an exciting contribution to this field by incorporating a number of discrete approaches under one banner, showing an understanding of ways in which non-linear music can be created and presented, and also pulling together and examining the new roles we are beginning to take on under the increasingly radioactive heading of "hetero".

The proliferation of events such as these raises the issue of what the right setting for such work might be, in order to fulfil its unique possibilities. During July, another exhibition with markedly similar aims was staged at the Museum of Installation, also in South London. *Test Sites* included technology for manifesting bound brainswaves as sound and light. Perhaps in the future we'll all just say indoors, listening to the music in our own heads. *Strange Attraction* is archived on the Web at [www.strangeattraction.com](http://www.strangeattraction.com)



Images, clockwise from top left: the *Strange Attraction* logo, Ross Corbett's *Symphony's* *Symphony*, Dominic Robson's *Piano Jars*

## GO TO:



### International Library of African Music (ILAM)

[ilam.ru.ac.za/history.htm](http://ilam.ru.ac.za/history.htm)

ILAM was founded in 1954 by the late sound architect Hugh Tracey (whose recordings have recently been reissued by the SWP label). Based in the Republic of South Africa, its Website stands as testament to Tracey's doggedness in chasing down the vanishing musics of Africa's most inaccessible areas. As well as listing the organisation's many cassette releases for sale, and carrying sound clips of various African instruments, the site lets you in on Tracey's own memoirs, discoring Boys' Own style treks through forbidding landscapes with heavy tape recorders in order to capture tribesmen's songs. The project lives on: there's news of ILAM's campaign to revive the Chopi music tradition, almost killed off during Mozambique's 20 year civil war.

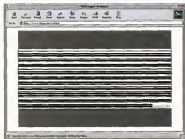


### One Final Note

[www.to.uinn.edu/~hoh0108/](http://www.to.uinn.edu/~hoh0108/)

Ecstatic jazz, free music, free improv surely the least likely style of music to make sense in a World Wide Web context? Undaunted, Scott Hirota's personal homepage keeps the flame of creative improvisation burning: the Webmaster is a passionate advocate of Albert Ayler, Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman, as well as Sabir Pateen, David S. Ware and Joe McPhee. OFN's menu includes new CD reviews, concert news (mainly US based), essays and theses, plus links to other virtual jazz resources: labels such as AJM Fidelity, Black Saint, Denmark, Okkadok and Wobaby Rail. To misquote Leroy Jones, if you can't click a mouse to free jazz, there's definitely something wrong with your fingers.

ROB JONES



www.dfuse.com/  
scanner



# on location

Going live: festivals, not parties

clubs in the flesh



Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men?  
Above: Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds. Inset: Lee Hazlewood

## Nick Cave's Meltdown

UK: London's South Bank

The choice of Nick Cave as curator of a festival with a utopian pancultural brief initially struck a word-nerd arts community. Certainly, his forays into literature (*And The Ass Saw The Angel*), radio and film (*Ghosts... Of The Cool Doss*) mark him down as the best qualified Meltdown curator to date. But delegating a utopian task to a man who has in the past seriously expressed doubts about people working together for the good of a community could be interpreted as the South Bank cynically gambling on the sure bet of Cave's pulling power, rather than his merits for the task. Much of his music has retracted the shimmering force of his disillusion through violent, often murderous ballads turning on the impossibility of love. In time, of course, his beliefs have been tempered by relations with his expanding international support network.

But during the course of the fortnight, Meltdown not only put flesh on the bones of Cave's community of outsiders, strengthening links across different media, genres and generations, it also reached out beyond the first circle of Cave obsessives happy to view his output against the backdrop of his tastes and influences.

Taking in Billie Whitelaw's Beckett evening and Barry Humphries' *Australia* night, Cheekyname's Palestine's splintering harmonics and Arvo Pärt's soul ballet, Pirelli's neo-realism and Cocteau's cinema of enchantment, former Ray Charles singer Jimmy Scott's thrilling falsettos and Lee Hazlewood's Las Vegas Country horribles, plus Cave family contributors from The Dirty Three, Ilse Bargeld and Conway Savage, the programme fanned out, and intertwined with a broad range of communities and interests. Its coherence can be attributed to Cave's decision to root his Meltdown in the world



Ed Barry Smith, the late US film maker, scientist and song collector to whose spirit the last night was dedicated

Even without the gala, Smith's onerous character suffused the event. An afternoon of his geometric abstractions, montages and glass animation films, dating from the 30s through the 50s, opened up the American century, kaleidoscopically merging,

overlapping or separating images of Old World Europe and the new continent. Once burnt onto the retina, those flickering shapes from the past formed part of the mental backdrop to the longings expressed in Cave and The Dirty Three's alienated musics. Parts (Estonian liturgies and more. Similar correspondences were drawn in Gary Lucas's live soundtrack for the German silent movie *The Golem*, where he fused avant-garde guitar trickery, blues slide and FX to underscore the feelings of awe, enchantment and horror to a faded but nevertheless wonderful version of the old Czech Jewish legend.

That the Meltdown found its lost home in Smith's community of songs was, of course, made most explicit on the last night, which was devoted to his *Anthology Of American Folk Music* box set. The extraordinary collection, spanning blues, gospel, Appalachian spiritual and Country and folk, was amassed in the 20s and 30s, in order, Smith said, to capture America's regional variations before they got homogenised by radio. The artists amassed for the tribute properly reflected the set's spread of influences, even as some contributions, notably Bryan Ferry's — inadvertently proved the songs' enduring qualities by default. And



much as an entrepreneur like Bill Winzor might have been essential to the marketing of so many artists, including Cave, Jarvis Cocker, Eric Burdon, Lucas, The McGarrigle Sisters, June Tabor, Eliza Carthy, Elliott Sharp and more, the hard-smooth rhythm section he regularly deployed to keep things rolling threatened to even out those very differences the set was designed to preserve. But there were many great moments, and best of all was Gavin Friday, Mary Margaret O'Hara and Jimmy Scott's brilliant bluesque through a song about the Titanic, which closed with Scott's hymning "I want My God To Test", his work sounding like it was rising from the watery depths.

For many, the bill Scott shared with a Nick Cave solo performance two nights earlier was the festival highlight. The host's place in the mood community of Meltdown, where he could find beginnings of songs without getting flustered, and then render himself within the framework of intimacy opened up by his mistakes, indicated that, perhaps he is finally at home with himself and a public.

On the opening night, however, Cave was right about to live the same chance. Closing for the whirlwind fury of *The Bad Seeds*, he gave the audience the now rare opportunity to catch them in close up at the Royal Festival Hall, rather than the bams their pulling power usually lands them in. The sombre quiescence of Cave's "Brompton Oratory" was possibly a tender response to the day's news relating to the death of Cardinal Hume. "The Mercy Seat," often the centrepiece of Cave's performances, was monumental in its reach and awesome in its power. Mick Harvey and the rhythm men provided a muscular bass for the song, and violinist Warren Ellis wrenched the speed up several gears while guitarist Blixa Bargeld provided like a stealthy panther to the side, pussant in his demeanour.

Bargeld was back a few days later with *Rele/Speech*. He sat in a series of solo performances for microphone and four effects pedals. No one really knew what to expect. Least of all Bargeld who, on strolling out, announced, "I don't really know what I'm doing here. It's not exactly love or most, chance (smile). I just love this little push of adrenaline in my head." And without further ado he gave a curdling shriek into the mic and when micro-second's his amplified versions were whipping around the hall.

Blixa Bargeld



Something of a Renaissance man in his range of subjects, which link music, science and technology, Bargeld's self-proclaimed pseudo-scientific environment was captivating, a triumph of the alchemy of imagination. With the smallest building blocks of sound, swirling rhythms and textures were created with a subtle control and, often, deprecating humour. He entered with a philosophical tourment between fear and joy, generated as a piece of linguistic paganism. Fear won. His second performance, *The Execution Of Precious Moments*, featuring Bargeld and a panel of actors among his cast of reminiscences solicited from the public, was a questionnaire, was a nice enough rite for radio, but not so compelling as theatre.

Humour is a subjective thing. God knows, but Bargeld was funnier (for all the right reasons) than Sir Les Polanski (for all the wrong reasons). Billed as *Australa Nigra*, Sir Les is, like Dame Edna Everage, a singular creation from the future emigration of comic genius Barry

Humphries. There are, in these two characters, rich veins of meaning and association, even if we're not all the jokes before.

The triple bill with Anjo Part (played by the heavily named Anonymous String Ensemble led by Leo Phillips, Drig, Thew and Andre Samsonov) offered the greatest opportunity for audience mass. In the event, it was more of a rock than a classical crowd, but all well and good they listened to the *Edwards*'s greatest hits with breath drawn in. Like Cave himself, the Drig Three should be seen close up, at least once. Only with violinist Ellis and superlative drummer Jim White in your sights is it possible to see just how well they interact. It's easy to overlook guitarist Mick Turner, but arguably, he's the member who holds it all together, defining the framework for Ellis's long, lyrical violin lines. Samsonov's music, which coaxed the night's bill, was centred around a premiere of his *Red Desert* for chamber orchestra and a box of three spanning atmospheric concrete effects. Various janglings and much gleeful portended glow, before resolving into a considered elegy.

By way of contrast, *Metabolism*'s "contemporary music" night was altogether more euphoric. Presumably forgiven for breaking a few piano strings during his performance at last year's U2 Festival.

Jimmy Scott



Charlemagne Palestine attacked the Purcell Roll's keyboards with an equal savagery. His motivations were entirely musical, as nothing in his demeanour suggested he had an angry bone in his body. Pounding the same narrow run of keys and pumping the loudness pedal like Jerry Lee Lewis, he sent up clouds of tones and overtones that coalesced into ascending phantom chorals of noise, astonishing beauty and which stayed with you long after his set was over.

Or Nina Simone. As Cove correctly titles *Metabolism*'s biggest draw for a non-committed audience, is a difficult quantity. It's easier to be kinder to her memory and her moral significance than the current actuality of the magnificent ruin of her voice. Even if Simone is a shadow of her former self and the force that her extraordinary voice was expended something to be remembered, she can still pull out the stops. Her closing rendition of *Bird's "Be the Quilted Pais"* was a warning of delicate beauty to be remembered always.

LOUISE GRAY/DAVID KOFF

Pifford Graves



#### Fourth Annual Vision Festival USA, New York St Nicholas Ct Myra Church

"We are what we witness," proclaims a starting at the Fourth Annual Vision Festival. Those five words serve as the manifesto for the heady gathering of avant-jazz's freest souls. Held in a church basement on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, there's a revival quality to the event, from the opening invocation by Joseph Jamali through the gathering of legends in memory of drummer Denis Charles closing the festival. On this occasion, revival both refers to the quasi-religious fervour of the festival's gathered masses, and to its celebration of the aesthetic of late 60s experimentation. A cynic might dismiss it as proselytising, but the converted, but unlike the bland corporate sponsored jazz festivals that bloom like wildflowers in New York every June, Vision Festival is organised by artists, whose serious outreach programme encourages younger artists with unorthodox approaches to mix it up with their elders.

But just because the festival doesn't shy away from Vinyolotti music, doesn't mean it's pitched like a Sunday sermon. "It's not as understood as a form of discipline of the feelings, and a programming of sensations," Susan Sontag wrote, "then the feeling (or sensation) given off by a Rauschenberg painting might be like that of a song by The Supremes." Translated into this context, the Vision Festival is like a museum opening of Old Masters and Young Pretenders, complemented with programmes of ikemonded poetry, dance, painting and sculpture. In other words, it's the deepest party you'll ever be invited to.

Inevitably, each of the 17 nights is dominated by an artist with an overwhelming vision, and one set in particular, from Chicago's tenor saxophonist Ben Anderson, drummer Harold Drake and bassist William Parker, soars above all the others. But every day has its own merits.

Day one, The War-studied ensemble, opening and closing the festival, are an excellent enhancers. Plagued with sound

problems, The Visions Orchestra, featuring 15 of the festival's best players led by Alan Saxe on synthesizer, fail to produce the promised opening bang. But Cooper-Ploors's delightful short set on the baps, drive drum riffs and a piano (for a boogie-woogie version of "The Hokey-Dokey") compensates for Saxe's fecked group extravaganzas, providing livid and hard simultaneously. Leading a quartet of Bayard Lancaster, Louise Bellagains and Wilber Morris drummer Sunny Murray whoops and rolls the evening to a close.

Day two, Another mesmerising solo performance takes the evening's mood. With a delicate bowing style weighted with centuries of history, violinist Leroy Jenkins keeps all his balls in the air, his expressive sonic sagging eventually quelling the chatty bar crowd. No mean feat considering The San Rita Artists, under Marshall Allen's leadership were dancing in the aisles just moments before.

Day three, Tedious early sets from The Rethed At Ensemble and The Andrew Lamb Quartet keep everyone counting the seconds until mutescored Joe Manen finally takes the stage with his violinist Jon Mat and hardhitting drummer Randy Denard. The elder Manen sounds like a whistling leopard on cinder, and Christine Cappelletti's stop-action dancing raises the performance up to the speed of a fast-paced bookend.

Day four, Not a bad turn out all right. The Irig Mark Drosser Quartet, Cooper-Ploors again, the live backing Jon Miller's dancers, and Harriet Bluer's peering bantam shreds all hold their own. At least until they're blown away by David S Ware Quartet's brief hurricane force of a set, in which new drummer Guillermo E Brown purges all memories of his shaky debut a month before (when the quartet opened for Sonic Youth) upon.

Day five, Boston's young Sankarika Strings glow like playful fireflies when their violin, cello and bass are augmented by No Neck Buss Band and Tent Bessie's Pfettermeyer Hayner, and mislabeled Daniel Carter. The latter sets the tone, moving from sax to flute to trumpet to clarinet, before leading a baroque conclusion on sax. Ron Aron Barak delivers a history of faith, followed by a blasphemous Zeena Parkins on electric harp. Her Hendri-

# Sonar 99

Spain: Barcelona CCCB/Mar Bell la

It's a bit too early in the day for this. I've barely digested my lunch when a butt-naked woman starts shimmying on stage with Cologne electronics duo Fetsch Park. If it's wanted to see this I would have gone to Club Seso down on Las Ramblas, instead of the CCCB, the minimalist, hi-tech arts centre which is the main venue for Barcelona's annual Sonar event, now one of the world's most ambitious festivals of electronic music and culture in fact. Fetsch Park's limp dick Krühenw-patche (sneak vocal: "We'll sleep together without fucking") would probably even throw a regular gig in Barcelona's red light district. And they've got bigger toys.

This year, there was enough freeloading House music at Sonar to make the lacunae of difference sound extra special. Bernd Friedmann's solo Nonplace Urban Field set under burning curves in the SonarLab was a case in point. His microscopic attention to detail has lately been deployed in the choreographing of 'younger' sounds: Wurliizer droplets, brushed drums, vases (also his recent collaboration with Atom Heart, as Panger). Friedmann has always been interested in evoking the 'dead' spaces of experience, and his new sound turns the lounge into the living room. In the same tent, fellow Cologne FX Randoms brought a literal application to the term 'lap too much'. Sitting cross-legged on a speaker cabinet, he produced catcalls and automated streaks of electronic whitewash from a Powerbook perched on his knees. Randoms's stone-road-the-campfire approach provided an appropriate context for this new computer music of tiny, intimate gestures. By contrast the Mago Powerbook trio generating equivalent music, sounded lost on the main stage in the CCCB's reinforced bunker. Pita and Fenniez have been improvising with Jim O'Rourke in this configuration for the best

part of a year now, and like the best improv units, they have grown familiar with each other's ticks and traits. Also like improv, in this music, failure can be as delightful as 'success'. Afterward, O'Rourke claimed he wasn't satisfied with the performance, but the criteria for this music are still in the process of being worked out, and the gaping void between ubiquitous bass thresholds and tiny short-out noise at the top end, can be a tiny short-out noise to occupy

Just minutes before the scheduled start of his performance with Pita and Fenniez, O'Rourke had been appearing on The Wire's Sonar panel alongside Suicide's Alan Vega, Disobey cultist Russell Hewell and Spanish writer Luis Utes Yebra. Discussing the present day effectiveness of revolutionary noise without the input of a representative from Digital Hardcore is a bit like talking about cubism without Picasso, but Vega managed to convince us that he was still rocking for the same tried-up reasons that made him commit Suicide to the world in 1970 — even if the agglies of his body in the audience showed he's got a little less to be nihilistic about these days. The previous night, however, Suicide's set had seemed shrivelled and shrinkwrapped in time. Martin Rev's keyboard upgrades howl pounded water on his once rotten sound, and Vega's on-stage hammering turns the performance into a celebration of survival rather than an attempt at further evolution.

Suicide might have benefited from David Toop's sotto voce reminding of the opening sections of his Extinction book, dreamlike sermons cast in the mould of Ballard or Harquer. Spoken deliveries are never really to make accessible in a stand up audience situation like this, but Toop's use of audio projections and backing tracks from his new Hit Parade III CD, a laudacious sound pool with the likes of Rhyx Chetum, Paul Schutze and Tawin Sangi lounging around in it, compresses the book's content into a melodramatic-splashed cocktail that sinks to a moving, entranced climax. Over a tear-jerking



Martin Rev



Fenniez

cocktail piano loop supplied by Tom Rechter, Toop imagines Les Baxter meeting his maker in a sunbomber, while on the screen, eagles soar into a desert's setting sun.

These days, Sonar packs so much into its three 16-hour days that the lasting impression is one of fragments. Taken generating vocal barks and squalls like a Paul Klee sieve through the thicket of 'tech-dub' sprayed out by Chan Reaction DJs Venqueur and Substance, DJ Seokkyu merrymongers his DJ set to pick at a thumb piano, the tropical oven of the Mar Bell's stormy dance hall making enjoyment of Blackman and Jeff Mills almost impossible. Superwoman's shimmering live electronic percussion, the exhalation of Spanish club and Techno artwork, so much more conclusive, and memorable than much of the country's electronic music, and Pan Sonic's Mike Varone in golf gear, spinning a happy assortment of dub and lower's rock in the small hours. Mike's set was a far cry from the genuinely disturbing installation-boxes back at Sonar HQ, which included a virtual shooting gallery in which rifles fire music, a large mannequin that bombards you with insults and offensive language, and a roomful of fluffy bunnies all begging for sexual gratification. Now that's something you don't see on Las Ramblas.

ROE YOUNG

like approach flows naturally into Thurston Moore's guitar histrionics, though neither are really a match for Saturnali's more restrained power.

Day six: The delicate manoeuvres proffered by Gerrit Marlin Gussel in her trio with drummer Perry Herringway and bassist Mark Dossier linger longer in the memory than some of the more muscular music following in her wake. Much of its success is down to Herringway's misdirection: use of silence and his playful showman's wit. Compared with Gussel's economy, First Meeting, a collaboration with neofolkers Roscoe Mitchell, drummer Thurman Barker, throat singer Thomas Buckner and pianist Boris Bergman, wastefully fails to realise the sum of its considerable parts.

Day seven: Peter Brotzmann's Die Like A Dog Quartet turns the hall into a New Orleans wake. Bassist William Parker (who organises the Vision Festival each year with his wife dancer Patricia Nicholson) and Harid Drake play like they're an autonomous unit within the larger scheme of things, which incorporates Brotzmann's roaring sax duelling with Toshiron Kondo's vibrant trumpet over 45 minutes with no quarter given. Yet Parker's got energy enough to later buck up poet David Buell.

Day eight: New York's jagged summer arrives in time for John Zorn, set with drum legend Milford Graves. The huge crowd might be here for Zorn, but he is clearly outmatched by Gussel's jaw-dropping, octopus-like performance. Astonishingly, their set is topped by Parker, Drake and Anderson's trio performance. Fred Anderson, a Chicago tenor legend who thinks bar and runs a Sunday night jam session at the Windy City's Velvet Lounge, blows for an hour nonstop. Heinevrie, Drake and Parker seem possessed, playing in sync, taking whimsical solos, and creating an over-the-top foundation for Anderson's feverish, rosy melodies.

Days nine and ten: Bassist Wilbur Morris, who has also played several times over the 11 days, puts in a muscular performance backing Noah Howard. Before going on to lead his own band, Wilberforce, through a Sunday set scatted with moments of heady bliss. But clearly the festival's real man in Parker, who turns out for Alan Silva and New Orleans's bluesy Kidd Jordan. His range is every bit as remarkable as his stamina. The following night he's pacing piano! Matthew Snipe through an extended improvisation jump-started from their current DMA album. After Parker and Snipe's mindless music, the set from accident-prone Phoebe Legere, percussionist Lou Ann and bombastic Jim Staley is an anti-climax.

The last day: Andrew Cyrille's Quartet and Billy Bang's Jazz Doctors make a fine start to Memorial Day, the benefit for the Luis Denis Chaves. But the all-star drum choir, led by Billy Higgins with Sunny Murray, Rashied Ali, Cyrille, Jimmy Hops and Warren Smith, as the festival's biggest disappointment. Each player takes a brief solo turn, but because they



Head Stage: The Wire stand at Sonar

rarely play together. The overall piece is of its time and starts Murray turns out to be the biggest prize. Refusing Hagen's cues and walking offstage when Cyphre leads musicians and crowd alike through an ill-advised set of chanting and clapping. Fortunately, his behaviour is neutralised by the good vibrations humming through all the festival's alternate universes.

TON ROE

## 16th Annual International Festival Musique Actuelle

Canada/Victoriaville various venues

I own an etching by the St. Petersburg artist Karyl Miller in which three musicians, playing cellos and a cello horn, sit around a single floor lamp surrounded by shadows. Their heads are intensely focused on a small, dull ball that hangs poised, silent and impenetrable as the moon, above the drum head.

This image hangs near my bed, I see a every day, and lately it's reminding me of the 16th Annual International Festival Musique Actuelle in Victoriaville. Canada. Not simply because drummer-percussionists turned out to be heroes of the long weekend at the French-speaking dandyland town but because so many of the 24 concerts expertly produced by festival founder Michel Lescazeur in four aptly sized venues, cast a gloomy, dysonian spell.

Victoriaville certainly boasted variety, from Western Canadian cellist Peggy Lee's neat charts for chamber jazz ensemble opening the event through the epic thunder-and-lightning finale by Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore and Lee Ranaldo with turntable pioneer Christian Marclay, which took place in a holiday inn, transformed with diaphanous into a 3000-seat black box theatre. You also got theatrically processed singing from Spain's Estrella Miranda, "Maestro Sosa's" funny installation of remote-controlled clappers on wiggly wires, which introduced a random element to the precise force and timing of their drumstrokes, and too improv galore — much of it from New York. New York. There were three Japanese groups (Sachiko M's cello Hoaho, Tami Marlowe and Sachiko M's and Otono Yoshiko's trio ISO), out jazz units charming folk-rooted artists (notably, Joe Bittova) and many DJs, computers and samplers.

How, then, could the concerts seem so monochromatic and pointless? Because the bulk of the musicians rejected familiar tonality, expressive melody and most any hint of pulse in preference for high-tech low-engagement formalist abstractions, inward-turned noodling and four long outposts without discernible form.

The best improvisers knew better. Victorico also sampled John Zorn and master drummer Milford Graves matched each other's raging tones to reach the air and eventually recede into rhythm. It was obvious,

they'd mastered the physical and mental challenges of sustained spontaneous improvisation, their inter-actors, based on acute listening and instant response, were exhilarating.

Similarly, veteran German free saxophonist Peter Brötzmann's tenor/soprano-to-the-max Tenet, featuring saxophonists Ken Vandermark and Mats Gustafsson, processing trumpeter Toshiron Kondo, violinist/cellist Fred Lonberg-Holm, vibronist Jeb Bishop, bassists Ken Kessler and William Parker, and drummers Hamid Drake and Michael Zerang, produced humming noise, exploding jazz conventions in pursuit of transcendence — but even at its most extreme, the music retained links to human utterance. Their set (also in the hockey rink) comprised loosely stretched but distinct pieces. A trio of clannets evoked a forest thicket, Gustafsson improvised a conduction à la Bulch Horns and the quartet's syncretized diat of the Chicago-based drummers, especially, gave birth to the less moving acts that had come before.

Whether employing conventional acoustic and amplified instruments or digital sound sources, many of the festival's other



contributors fell into approaches they may have thought were daring when in reality they were dated, that interlarded to be conciliatory but were instead soulless and nihilistic. Postmodernism reinforcing this far from reality remained inoperable to anyone not actually in on the game.

The jazz-influenced performers spoke among each other mostly in drab, muted tones. Montreal's Klaxon Guele benefited from its electric guitarist Bernard Falaise's occasional rock licks. Paul Pinsky's trio was creak and crack but colorful. Keith Tippett's "Majesty," unfolding its dense fabric from the start, gained dimension only when tenor saxophonist Paul Oursini picked up his bagpipes, too. Perennial live without pause over the improving strings of The CT Spring Quartet. Headliner obscuring them: Playing alongside bassist Dominic Duval, vocalist



Peter Brötzmann Tenet. Below: Jon Perreman

Soek-Yin Lee and vocalist David Prentice. John Oswald's alto sax was disembodied and duffly — no sin in itself — but the quartet's reach was reduced to Soek-Yin Lee's syllabic "mms."

The output of the digital instruments was even more dispiriting. Rather than drawing alternatives to the aural clichés of the world Otono Yoshiko conjured a strained, icy reverberance, making for suspense but not payoff. Marlowe at least directed the dutifully attentive (hypnotized?) crowd in confrontational whine noise and running bottom. Jim O'Rourke splashed about in barely differentiated shades of gray, but click and switch, with some of the creativity of electronics explorers from 30 years ago. Li-Qun Nian, appearing with a trio called Quark, actually replicated the image in my etching, absorbed in sonic nuances he got by striking his horn with a small cylinder flat on its head while "bombar" Atsu Tanaka did a sto-mo-licker figure dance wearing sound-emitting gloves, and processing vocalist Zack Sentei repeated his few tricks, over and over.

In this context, New York keyboardist Anise Gosselin and electric guitarist Roger Kleier were virtually vauldervain. Gosselin also used samples and drumming, but mainly explained each of her songs, embracing specific parameters: tensions, beginnings, middles and ends, humour and even portraiture. Kleier's playing was spare but valuable, while entirely lyrical to Gosselin. He made his own points. Friend and neighbor Elton Sharp's "Tenebris," usually a crowd-pleaser, had an off-night, though saxophonist Sam Fulderson gave their blues-reverent jams, and Sharpy steel guitar soloists caught fire.

Words underachievers of the festival were members of the mind-numbing neo-Pro ensemble Godspeed You! Black Emperor!

which congested the desatur of its heavy empty themes and additive orchestrations with background films of toxic waste dumps and a dog falling endlessly through space. Clapping to be minimalist, they barely even tried — a complaint that can't be lodged against the festival's dramatic extravaganzas.

Thurston Moore and Lee Ranaldo began with rising guitar clusters and for more than an hour never looked back — though neither did they get much higher. They struck the classic poses of post-pop liberation, waiting on their guitars with pedals and feedback and no melodies, harmonies, express or implied, to hold them down. To cut through the din, Marclay shattered off 18 rpm discs directly into a mic. The show didn't sound like much, but it sure looked like something.

On the plane back to New York, Ranaldo said he and Moore had recently poured through the oeuvre of 20th century American experimentalists such as Cage and Pynchon, and were experimenting with songs that start where the sonic ecstasy of Jimi Hendrix used to end. Wendt Hendrix named those endings, starting with hooks and lines we could cling to through the wildest rides.

In Victoriaville, such lingua franca was abandoned, as musicians submerged themselves in private processes and ungiving objects — like those in my etching. All the more disconcerting, since Musique Actuelle wants to demonstrate "its relevance as a force of change and constant evolution" in support of an international avant-garde "to share with [the musicians] their joys and fears and their hopes, for even better tomorrow." Good intentions, and Victoriaville's attempts deserve further consideration — because it's a bleak society indeed, whose music gives off hardly any heat or light at all.

HOWARD PLANER

21 INTERNATIONAL

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# out there

August's selected festivals, live events, club spaces and broadcasts



Mark E. Smith

## UK Festivals

### The Big Chill: Enchanted Garden 99

Weekend-long ode to the laid-back lifestyle in Italy. With live relaxation facilities include Harlequin, Bill Bruford, Squirrel Bait, Roger Eno & Lol Hammond, Fridge, Pinstripe Monks, Ashley Beedle, Mr. Scuff, Brian Black, Freakazoid, A Man Called Adam and Jazzyfizz. Further chilling out will be aided and abetted by multimedia performances, site-specific installations, an Internet centre and an on-air radio station. Salisbury Lamer Tree Gardens. 6-8 August, weekend ticket \$55. (ticketline 0171 771 2000). Web: [www.totemweb.co.uk](http://www.totemweb.co.uk)

### Brecon Jazz Festival

The annual Welsh jazz extravaganza is back for its 16th year. Highlights of this year's line-up include Dave Murray celebrating the Ellington centenary, The Mingus Big Band, Johnny Griffin, trumpeters John Faddis and Roy Hargrove, hard-core New York Latin unit, Jerry González & The Fort Apache Band, Mal Waldron and Steve Lacy, Alexander Von Schlippenbach and Tony Oxley. Andy Hamilton & The Blue Notes, The Jason Rebello Trio (Bill Bruford's Earthworks) and Roberto Pío & His Latin Jazz Ensemble.

Brecon, various venues. 13-15 August, times/prices vary. 01874 62 55 57

### Creamfields

The annual over-the-top dance culture extravaganza hosted by the Liverpool superclub. Scattered among the usual mainstream dance spaces in a closed Merseyway airfield will be The Sugar Hill Gang, DJ Shadow, Coldcut, The Scratch Perverts and a drum 'n' bass tent from Headbitch. Liverpool 1065 Salford, 28 August, £37.50. 0780 902 000?

### Edinburgh International Jazz & Blues Festival

The Scottish festival has reached its 21st edition, and is still touching on a broad spectrum of music from the jazz continuum. Highlights include Dr. John, Greg Osby, Quartet Van Morrison, David Sanchez, Junior Mance, The Blind Boys of Alabama, Ravi Coltrane Quartet and Jazz Jamaica. Edinburgh, various venues, 30 July-8 August. 0131 467 5200. Web: [www.jazzmusic.co.uk](http://www.jazzmusic.co.uk)

### Flux Festival

The third annual alternative music wing of the Edinburgh Festival this year includes performances from Mark E. Smith and The Fall, John Cale, Nick Cave, Orbal David Thomas & The Polo Orchestra featuring

Jackie Leven and Linda Thompson, Iyer, Culler and Ken Kray with his Henry Purcell. Edinburgh, various venues, 13-28 August, times/prices vary, (ticketline 0131 220 4349). Web: [www.fluxfestival.com](http://www.fluxfestival.com)

### Hull Jazz Festival

Mainstream jazz fest expanded this year to coincide with Hull's 700th anniversary celebrations. Headliners and highlights include Lee Konitz, Jazz Jamaica, Andy Hamilton, Django Bates, Trevor Watts & The African Master Drummers, Orphy Robinson and Guy Barker. Kingston-Upon-Hull, various venues, 31 July-8 August, times/prices vary. 01482 226 655

### Portobello Festival

Small festival in London's hippest neighbourhood includes seasonally priced performances by local musicians such as Fun-Damental and Rowan Muzum. Queensway, Portobello, North London, featuring Keith Lebane and Nico Gomez, Sacred Circle with Cleveland Waboss and Byron Wallen and Guava. London, Portobello, various venues, 31 July-15 August, times/prices vary, 0181 964 3329. Web: [www.portobellofestival.co.uk](http://www.portobellofestival.co.uk)

### Terrastock III

The American alt-rock community's three-ring psychedelic circus comes to the UK for the first time. Featuring music championed by the *Promiscuous* Terrastock zone, space explorers will include Damon & Nazms, Wendy & Carl, The Bevis Front, Bardo Pond, El Power, Haze, Holy Mager, Tom Rapp and Pearl Before Swine. Spafields, The Lofters, Abchurch and Brother J & Vibeaux. London, LU1 27-29 August, weekend tickets 145-55, 0181 926 6289. Web: [www.rockfestgarden.co.uk](http://www.rockfestgarden.co.uk)

### Total Eclipse Festival

A six-day festival celebrating the solar eclipse in the Devon countryside. Live acts include Orisat, Lumb, Colkour, Sugar Hill Gang, Richie Haven, Phil Professor, African Headcharge, Jah Wobble, Nightmares, On Wax, Innervision Orchestra, Gregory Isaacs and The Herbaliser plus DJ sets from 4 Hero, Raze, Sae, Grooverider, Faber (DJ Krust), DJ Hyde, Ed Rush, Picky King, Kenny Ken, Andy C, C.J. Bohland, DJ Can, Dave Argy, Phil Hozy, Anthony Slater, Spooky Kev, Daniel and T. Power. In addition, expect the usual normal heading, art installations, circus performances, children's area and sundry fringe entertainers. Devon Newham Park. 6-11 August, week ticket \$99, tickets through Ticketmaster 0870 444 4224. Web: [www.rocktastock.co.uk](http://www.rocktastock.co.uk). And if all you sun-

whoppers out there don't fancy that, there is always the Lunar Eclipse Festival, which features Plastikron, Afro Cat Sound System, Fern Kutz, Howe B. Green, Velvet, Cat Craig's Poppers in People, Derrick May and more among the Bristol headlines. Cornwall The Lizard Goodship Downs. 7-14 August, week ticket \$125, info/booking 0906 210 2376

## International Festivals

### At Home Abroad

The fifth festival of international interdisciplinary arts collaborations in Tebor, Czech Republic, hosted by CESTA, which describes itself as "a laboratory for alternative forms of cross-cultural communication". The festival aims to "explore and collect reflections on adopted cultures from immigrants, Belgians, Latvians and Resident Artists, and others making their homes on foreign soil". Alongside music, the festival includes installations, performance pieces, spoken word, visual art and performing. Participants come from the US, UK, Germany, The Netherlands, Brazil and beyond. Czech Republic Tebor, various venues, 19-23 August, info 00 42 361 258 004, e-mail [cesta@tebor.cz](mailto:cesta@tebor.cz). Web: [www.cesta.cz/tebor.htm](http://www.cesta.cz/tebor.htm)

### Free Music XXVI

Organised by a collective of improvisers, this celebration of free music takes over a theatre in Antwerp for two days. Featured freedom searches include Fred Van Hove, Phil Minton with The Arke Goudviske, Quintus, Irene Schweizer & Pierre Favre, Locomotiv Können, Martin Banno, Mike Coyanets and Johannes Bergmans. Belgium Antwerp Theatre 60700. 6-7 August, info 00 32 3 230 6075. Fax: 00 32 31 281 5084

### Futura 99

A four day event in Crest, France, devoted to the elusive world of electroacoustic art, the contemporary outcropping of music on concrete. The festival will present over 100 works spread across five daily concerts and encompassing film screenings and music presentations. The huge programme includes a strand devoted to new Italian electroacoustic music, as well as contributions from Pierre Henry, Gilles Fauré, the Dorian Islands, Darius Vahagian, Bernhard Gunter, Michael Prime, Francis Dhomont and many more. France Crest, 25-28 August, for full info e-mail [laurent@waxradio.fr](mailto:laurent@waxradio.fr), web [perso.waxradio.fr/futura](http://perso.waxradio.fr/futura)

### Jazz Middelheim

22nd annual Belgian jazz fest honouring both

the American tradition and the European avant garde. This year's participants include The David Murray Big Band, John Zorn's Masada, Malinda Hangelberg conducting The Instant Composers Pool Orchestra, Jerry Gonzalez & The Fort Apache Band and Lee Konitz. Belgium: Antwerp Dark Den Brecht 11-15 August, 00 32 741 5400 fax 00 32 741 4538

## International Festival Of Alpine Music

Directed by Mathias Rugg, leader of The Vienna Art Orchestra, this event focuses on music and musicians from Europe's alpine countries. The festival takes place in three venues and will include premieres of new musical theatre pieces, compositions for brass band ensembles, and solo works for such unconventional alpine instruments as alpenhorn and cornet. Switzerland: Altdorf / Kanton Uri, various venues, 20-22 August. Web: [www.alpenfestival.ch](http://www.alpenfestival.ch)

## Musica Mallorca

Attempting to recapture the original Balearic spirit, this new festival promises three days of fun in the sun with 4 Héro, Courtney Pine, Little Louis Waga, The Herbaliser, PJ Scruif, Norman Jay, Jazzanova, The Mad Professor and more. Mallorca: various venues, 20-22 August. weekend ticket £75. telephone 015 912 9000. Web: [www.musica Mallorca.com](http://www.musica Mallorca.com)

## Saalfelden International Jazz Festival

21st meeting of the jazz and avant garde tribes in Austria. This year's alpine climbers include Kronos Quartet, Noel Akchote, Bobby Previke, Dave Holland, Sko Borgeid, John Zorn, Jorjaaleiden Tatum, Calvin Weston, Steve Coleman, Elliott Sharp, Marc Ribot, Santhosh Narayanki, Eli Finkel, Om Byron, Jack O'Connell, Olu Dara, Brijann Krause, Tim Berne, Marc Vandermarck, Harry Belafonte, Baron, Piero Pellorini and Ross Collinson. Austria: Saalfelden, various venues, 27-29 August. 043 6582 74963. Web: [www.yersonofestival.at](http://www.yersonofestival.at)



## Såns

A 20-day old festival that attempts to bring "the world's most beautiful music" to Antwerp. Punctuations, performers include Oumou Sangaré, the great salsa violinist Alfredo De La Fe, Black Star Liner, Frédéric Gelliano, Empire Buletje, DJ Ched, Sabbah, Jo and more. In addition there are parades, markets and events for children. Belgium: Antwerp Boechout, 29 July-1 August, 00 32 3 455 69 44. Web: [www.shns.be](http://www.shns.be)

## Special Events

### Dai Kyodo

Two multimedia performances from Japanese dancer Ken Ma in East London. Ma's movements to the music of a genre including Charles Heyward and John Edwards will trigger an interactive video installation by Rob Pitt and Paul V Smith. London: The Albany, 14 August, 8pm. \$65/4.50. 0181 692 4446. London Seitz, 21 August, 8pm. 0171 392 9032

### Rx

A day (and night) of music morphed from the internet, obsolete PCs and computer-generated pop groups. Participants include MDRPA star Alex Schilling, Andi Freeman and Jason Scott. During the day there will be CD-RX demos, software displays, installations and meet and greet sessions with the artists. Bristol: Coda Cinema, 31 July, noon-7pm free, 7-11pm \$4/5.31. 011 907 4190

## On Stage

**Add N To (X)** Pulse Records two roll out their analogue electronics one more time. London: Scala, 12 August. info 0171 833 2022  
**Ambitronix** Jazz/funkmer beatboxtriffo soundtracks featuring percussionists Steve Argüelles and Brighton's Hipnot Hero Rex. London: Sater, 6 August, 8.30pm. \$6/5.5. 0171 392 9032

**Harriet Birnietwe** Flautist Kathryn Thomas performs works by the great British modernist composer as part of the Proms Festival. London: Serpentine Gallery, 6 August. Goro info 0171 402 6015  
**Recoil Budd** Californian Ambient legend dials over for a rare UK gig. Manchester: Band On The Wall, 5 August, 7.30pm. \$10. 0161 833 0683

**HJ Cule** Honking his pedal steel up to PJ's the guitarist plays works by Saks, Onop, Debussy, Moncorno and Budd with his Transparent Music Ensemble. London: Westway Circus Garden, 11 August, 10pm free. 0171 418 2783

**Ravi Coltrane** The son of John and Alice continues his attempt to create his own legacy. London: Jazz Cafe, 4 August. \$15/\$12.50. 0171 916 6060

**Damon & Naomi** Former Galaxie 500 members rock out indie style. Newcastle:

Cumberland Arms, 24 August. Born, 54. 0191 224 2171

**Dr John** The timeless ambassador of New Orleans trips the night fantazist. London: Shepherd's Bush Empire, 14 August, Edinburgh: Queen's Hall, 15

**Ice Ensemble** As part of Outlines Music On The Square series, these members of The Irish Chamber Orchestra dedicate concerts to Astor Piazzolla (13 August) and Arvo Part (20). Outlines Meeting House Square, 8.30pm free, tickets from Temple Bar Properties, 18 Eastace Street, Dublin 2

**Instrumental** Leading lights of the neo-classical scene play a free concert in advance of the release of their debut album. Abstract which features string arrangements of tracks by Eric Mobley. The Orb etc. London: Westway Circus Garden, 25 August, 10pm free. 0171 418 2783

**Ken Kesey & The Merry Pranksters** The original acid casualty and his band of revelers look to go further than ever on their 'Whoremaster' tour. Salisbury Big Chit, 17 August. Plymouth: Essential Festival (B), Cornwall: Minack Theatre (11). London: Broxton Academy (15), Bristol: University Victoria Rooms (17), Swansea: Brannagh Hall (18), Liverpool: Royal Court Theatre (21), Dublin: Vicar Street Theatre (22), Belfast: St George's Market Hall (23), Edinburgh: Princess Street Gardens (28)

**Greg Ouby** Also saxophonist returns to the UK for a two-week sojourn. Edinburgh: Liquid Rooms (30 July), Edinburgh: Counting House (31), Edinburgh: Hill (31), Manchester: Band On The Wall (1), London: Roman Road (2), 12-7 August

**Dorn Um Romulo** As part of the Breckenridge 99th Festival, an appearance by the gracie low-Waifher Roberti percussionist. London: Jazz Cafe, 11 August, \$12/\$10. 0171 916 6060

**Archie Shepp** The live music saxophone giant returns for a rare UK set. London: Jazz Cafe, 30 August, \$16/\$13.50. 0171 916 6060

**Sonag** Melancholy singer-songwriters dust off their guitars for the caribbean set. London: Union Chapel, 26 August. \$8. 0171 226 1686

**Sneaker Pimps** Spiky beathead soundscapes return with a new, gothic album just don't call it TripHop. Manchester: Roadhouse, 6 August. 9pm. \$6/5.5. 0161 228 1199

**McCoy Tyner Trio** The ever-reliable pianist rips with his brood of sound in tow. London: Jazz Cafe, 18-18 August. \$16/\$13.50. 0171 916 6060

## Club Spaces

**The Cooks** HighPop, soul and House from Dr Bob Jones. 16 August, a Fat City and Grand Central Records night. 13.1. Telephone's Dave Hill (20) and Tomoyuki Tanaka (27). Leeds: Azurum, Friday, \$6. info 0113 230 2113

**The Departure Lounge** Avantsoul play

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## out there

homage to Easy Listening. Trying to avoid the kitsch trap are Simon Fisher Turner: Paul Hood and Richard Sanderson (5 August), Mick Riche Project and Peter Cosack & Viv Cornthorn (12), Minnow and Ed Bamer (19) and The Simon H. Fell Trio (26). London: Queens Arms, Thursdays 8:30pm, 14/13 0181 463 0490.

**Electrorevised** Distressed Electro and unstable connections from Andrew Weatherall, Keith Tucker and residents Sherman and Andrew Curley. London: Crossbar, 12 August, 9pm-3am, £3, 0171 837 3218.

**Tun3ts** Breadbeat hedonism fuelled by Lol Hammond, Hugh: Headfirst and DJ Punk Roc with special guests Digs & Whooosh. London: Pias, 21 August, 9:30pm-6am, \$10-\$55, 0171 738 5255.

**Klimber** Dada improv space, this month featuring Unlucky No Gasha (12), Guneta (15 August), Murphy No Gasha (12), Anarcha (19), Lucas and Shmoo (26) and Marton Bellatallatallatallat Bass Trio. Electroclash and Cabbage Head (27). London: Kink, info 0181 800 5200.

**Kosmische** Take off on an actual plane with Ecstasy: Pure DJs: Rocky Shaw, Horton Jensen and Jim Blackledge. London: Upstairs at the Garage, 14 August, 9:30pm-3am, \$5-\$4, 0171 267 1818.

**Lyrical Lounge** Ultra-legendary HipHop DJ Grand Wizard Theodore puts in a rare UK appearance at this night hosted by DJ Pogo. London: Jazz Cafe, 5 August, 10:15-12, 0171 916 6060.

**Metalbox** Dionysian mayhem from the folks that brought you the Heavenly Sound and the Rumpus Room. Devadancers include Peter D from Smith & Mighty (7 August), Tim Love Lee (14), Andrew Weatherall (21) and Glucose Armada (28). London: Annexe, Saturdays 10pm-4am, \$8/\$5, 0171 287 9608.

**NY Sushi** Breakbeats, both r'n'n and chill, courtesy of DJ Hype (13 August), All Seeing Eye (20) and Nightmares On Wax (27). Sheffield: Loft, Fridays 10pm-3:30am, £10-14, 012 267 1869.

**Perverted Science** Tumbalito tea party featuring The Scratch Perverts and guest Riq. London: 333 Club, 20 August, 10pm-3am \$10-\$16, 0171 739 5949.

**Rotations** Live electronic wilderness from RSI Recordings artists M4d Man and Fast Robert. Manchester: Britons Protection, 31 July, 8-11pm, £3, 0161 881 5565.

**Signs** Old and New School HipHop jazz and funk from Mr Thing, Charlie Dark from Africa Blues, Rob Da Bank and Sahin Dilemman. London: Crossbar, 13 August, 9pm-3am, \$5-\$4, 0171 837 3218.

**Slack Sabbath** Inevitable Sunday shenanigans from DJs Pierre, Dabsonnet and Downfall (8 August) and DJs Dead and Dabsonnet (30). Brighton: LIT, Sundays 10pm-7pm, 11-1pm, 01273 325793.

**Sprawl** Cutting edge beat session from Pimp and Lamb's Arge (5 August), David

Topp (12), Paul Schütz and Simon Hodkins (19) and a Warm Interface night (26). London: Global Cafe, Thursdays, 7:30pm-midnight \$3/\$2, 0181 568 3145.

**Subtone** Bringing beats and attitude to the Cowbirds are Pans Fern (7 August), Massive Attacks: Phishout (14), Duo: To Dust Sound System (21) and Organic Audio with Tim Lowe (28). Chesham: Subtone, Saturdays, info 01242 576 925.

**Terminic Club** Hosted by the long running Leeds Improv club runners, a night of electronic noise and electroacoustic calm from Leezing's Niade, Dealer Huh and The Gray Wolves. Leeds: Fenlon, 8 August, info 0113 245 3908.

**Totolohed** These post-rocking Londoners fridge mix Speed Garage with Tortoise at a night hosted by B08. Stiles: Graham Massey. Manchester: Band On The Wall, 13 August, 9:30 pm, \$6, 0161 613 0682.

**Yeastime** The huge Tube crew's local modgie bridgeage with Shut Up And Dance. Austin: New, Fresh For 01 Raw Deal, Funk Bouzou and Theorem. London: Pias, 27 August, info 0171 738 5255.

## Incoming

**All Tomorrow's Parties** 'Indersbats and Tortoise headline a three day post-rock sojourn by the sea. Camber Sands Holiday Centre, 17-19 September, info 0171 704 6100 e-mail info@alltomorrowsparties.co.uk

**A Nice Weekend In London/A Nice Weekend In New York** The Mutator label celebrates ten years of eclectic activity with two festivals on either side of the Atlantic. London: LULU, 3-5 September, and New York: Irving Plaza, 23-25 September. Web: www.mutatorrecords.com

**Art Electronics 95** Austria's massive multimedia symposium, this year subtitled *Like Science*. Austria: Linz, 4-9 September. Web: www.art-electronics.com

**Banastelle** An excellent-looking season of German electronics and electroacoustic. Improv north of the border. Glasgow: CCA, 3-11 September, info 0141 332 7521 e-mail emil@cca-glasgow.com

**John Fahey + Derek Bailey** Joint UK tour for two absolute guitar heroes. Info: tel 0161 224 2289, e-mail bailey@ukramp.com

**Taktile-Born** Two-day alpine festival of music, installations, visuals, DJs and avant sound. Switzerland: Bern, 17 and 18 September. Web: www.control-team.ch

**Warsaw International Festival Of Contemporary Music** A massive festival of modern classical, electronic and new music in the Polish capital. Warsaw: various venues, 17-25 September, fax 00 48 22 831 06 07 e-mail festival@thepavilion-warsaw.pl

**NB!** All incoming events will be previewed in full in the September issue.

## Radio

### National

#### BBC Radio 1 9-99 PM

**John Peel** Tuesdays-Thursdays 10:20pm-midnight The best place to keep up with new rock, indie, Techno, Jungle, Electroclash, dub and the legendary sessions.

**Gilles Peterson** Wednesdays midnight-2am Up-and-coming beats, experimental drum 'n' bass, funk, psychedelic soul, and plenty more in between.

**Andy Kershaw** Thursdays midnight-2am Raw music and global sounds, including folk, reggae, out rock and more.

**Fabrizio Grooverider** Fridays 2-4am Two hours of vanguard drum 'n' bass.

**Westwood Rap Show** Fridays 11pm-2am Saturdays 9pm-midnight. Telf's best breaking HipHop hits.

**Austin Nightingale** Sundays 4-6:30am Chilled, eclectic sounds for après-clubbers' early risers and/or insomniacs.

#### BBC Radio 3 9-55 PM

**Jazz Century: 1959-Present** Sundays 6-6:30pm Weekly survey of jazz history. This month's episodes: *The Organ in Jazz* (7 August), *The Blue Note Sound* (14), *Mingus, Roach and Social Awareness in Jazz* (21), *Experiments With New Time Signatures* (28).

**Planet X** Tuesdays 10:45-11:30pm Eclectic mix of new music and discourse from Robert Santilli and Mark Russell.

**Jazz On 3** Saturdays 11:30pm-1am Ploem jazz recorded in concert. This month's highlights include: John Surman (7 August), performances recorded at the Brecon Jazz Festival (14).

### Regional

#### BBC Derby 94.2/95.1/104.5 FM, 1110 NW

**Soundscape** Sundays 3-6pm Ashley Franklin plays instrumental/electronic contemporary classical/systems music. *New Age and Ambient*.

#### BBC Greater London Radio (GLR) 94.9 FM

**Destination In** Wednesdays 9-10:30pm Ross Allen spins a midday, morphing selection of new music from global city and minimalism to experimental and leftfield pop.

**Jah Wobble** Thursdays 8-9pm Varied assortment of low-end and global sounds from the former PJL bassist.

**Charlie Gillett** Saturdays 7-9pm Rock, roots, dub, World Music, blues, R&B and more sounds of the city.

#### BBC Lancashire 95.5/103.9/104.9 FM, 885 MW

**On The Wire** Saturdays 11-1am Steve Barak's features mix of dub, experimental electronics, out rock, free improv and more.

#### BBC Merseyside 95.3 FM, 1405 MW

**The Late World** Tuesdays 9:30pm-midnight-2am New music for Roger Hill's mix of avant rock, psychedelia, warped Ambient and global genres in themed sequences.

#### BBC Scotland 82.4/94.7 FM

**From Back To HipHop** Wednesdays 8-9pm David Sellers drops jazz and new beats.

**Beat Patrol** Sundays 8-9pm Peter Aspin plays independent music across the spectrum.

**Electronica** Sundays 9-10pm Marc Percival (aka the latest Techno and dance tracks).

#### Cable Radio 88.8 FM (Millon Keynes)

**The Garden Of Ecstasy** Sundays/mondays 10pm-midnight Shane Quenne's blend of avant rock to electronic, mystical with dream soundbites.

#### Kiss 100 FM (London)

**Green Trees** Sundays 6-8pm Two-step breakbeats from the London duo.

**Paul Thomas** Sundays 3-5pm Experimental/electronic mix.

**Patrik Forge** Sundays 10pm-midnight Eclectic jazz-rock-jazz mix.

**Frost and Hype** Sundays/Mondays midnight-2am More breakfast than it's chilly the most 4 Here Mondays 2-4am Jazz, jungle, cyber-soul breakfasts, electrified grooves from the Reinforced duo and guests.

**Coin Deal** Wednesdays 2-4am Minimal Techno and concrete House.

#### Sun 102.7 FM (Brighton)

**Totally Wired** Sundays 11pm-1am Eclectic selection of leftfield independence tunes, localised with 60s/70s flashbacks.

**The Chili Factor** Sundays 5-7am Dave Crookes's continuous mix of drum 'n' bass, dub, psych-HipHop, classical, improv and electronics.

Out There items for inclusion in the September issue should reach us by **Friday 13 August**



# charts

Playlists from the outer limits of planet sound

## Sono Cairo 15

**Various** *Antrade* (Ash International RIP)  
**Swap** *Swap EP* (Musk Aus Strom)  
**Areavane** *Ocer 7"* (City Centre Offices)  
**Planet Jazz** *9 Functional Diva Track (8M18)*  
**To Rococo Rot** *The Amateur View (City Slang)*  
**David Toop** *Hot Pants Index* (Barooni)  
**Sinking Ping** (Karaoke Kalk)  
**snd** *Makendcassette* (Mile Plateaux)  
**Rhythm & Sound** *Camer (R&S)*  
**PlitS** *Microphon (Profan)*  
**Joachim Spieth** *ABI 99 (Kompakt)*  
**Shits 'N' Strips & 909** *Staccato Promises 12"* (Cheap)  
**The Modernist** *Mrs New Deal (Popular Tools)*  
**Chris Corda** *6 Billion Humans Can't Be Wrong (Disco B)*  
**A & K Shah** *Bombay The Hard Way (Motel)*  
*Compiled by Kristof Debris, Sono Cairo, Radio Antenna 103.3 FM, Belgium, Saturdays 9-10:30pm*

## Causality 15

**Tarentel** *Tarentel (Temporary Residence Limited)*  
**Tarwater** *Remix EP (Roomtone)*  
**Capitol & Sounds Of The Empire** (Planet µ)  
**Do Make Say Think** *Besides (Resonant)*  
**Andrea Parker** *Kiss My Arp (Ho' Wax)*  
**Acid Mothers Temple**  
*Paraphysical Freak Out Muff (PSF)*  
**Pilote** *Tonic (Certificate TB)*  
**Zan Lyons** *Suicide Desolate (Mosh Mosh)*  
**Foreign Terrain LP** - *Foreign Terrain*  
**Jaga/Kid Spatale** *Urny Gan (Planet µ)*  
**Pisid** *Brat Proof Clockwork (Warp)*  
**Yellow 6** *Scarbearthmusicallaroundme (Atomic)*  
**Pina** *Kryptonite (Bungalow)*

*Stewman: Patrick Puljinger  
(Shits 'N' Strips & 909)*

**Four Tet** *Glasshead (Output)*  
**American Analog Set** *The Golden Band  
(Emperor Jones)*

*Compiled by Andi, Chunky Records, Birmingham, UK 01922  
406183, e-mail: info@chunkyrecords.com, Web  
www.chunkyrecords.com*

## Tedium House 15

**Milovan Srdanovic** *Songs From West Of The Pelvic  
Griddle (Freedom From)*  
**Les Realizes Dénoués/Taj Mahal Travellers**  
*OZ Days Live 1973 (no label)*  
**Swell Maps** *International Rescue (Alive/Total Energy)*  
**Courts** *Eating An Estufa (Freedom From)*  
**Dylan Myoukis** *With Hicks In The Sudan (Spite)*  
**Anton Maiden** *Anton Maiden (Nihilism)*  
**Gestr Del Hemp** *Revenge (Laptop)*  
**Shimplych Gruppe/Peel'd Hearts Paste**  
*Live In Nippon 7" (Dual Power)*  
**Angst Hase Pfeffer Nase** *Recycled (Recycled)*  
**Universal Indians** *Thirst Of The Worm (American)*  
**This Heat with Mario Boyer Diekuuroh** *Togo Mago  
(Camberbury Dream)*  
**Nigel Bann** *Index (Emperor Jones)*  
**The Baseball Astrologer** *Famine Of The Soul  
(Holy Mountain)*  
**Jazz Finger** *The Little Girl On The Plane Who Turned  
Her Doll's Head Around To Look At Me (Muzumwa)*  
**Nurse With Wound** *Insect And Individual Silenced  
(Dynamic Superior)*  
*Compiled by Monica Marone, Tedium House, e-mail: cb  
kustodis@vmdheaven.com*

## The Office Ambience

**Einstürzende Neubauten**  
*Total Eclipse Of The Sun (Mute)*  
**Powerfield** *Electronic Electric Electronic (Paralactile)*  
**House On Mars** *Nun Niggung (Dour Choice)*  
**Various** *Doob Doob D'Rama, Filmstrips From  
Bollywood (Normal)*  
**Fluxion** *Vibrant Forms (Chain Reaction)*  
**Mahmoud Ahmed** *Ethiopiquest 6 & 7 (Buda Musique)*  
**Various** *Osmos (Leaf)*  
**Daniel Biro** *Elegant Enigmas (Sargasso)*  
**All Farka Touré** *Nisunka (World Circuit)*  
**Butthole Surfers** *Rembrandt Pussyhorse  
(Latino Bugger Vets)*  
**Jeff Kaiser** *Ganz Andere (pHtentum)*  
**Arsonists** *As The World Burns (Harador)*  
**Coil** *Music To Play In The Dark Vol 1 (Chalice)*  
**RLW & Lionel Marchetti** *Vier Vorspeise (Selektion)*  
**SMI** *Low Profile 1977-88 (Emanem)*  
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# epiphanies

## Christoph Cox learns the hustle with a Last Poet

"Get paid to listen to records," I thought, accepting a friend's offer to spend the summer of 1986 running his record shop in Providence, Rhode Island. As it turned out, 90 per cent of the stock was off limits, encased in shrinkwrap and not to be opened. So the imperative to have music playing at all times left only two options: bring in records and tapes from home or draw from the bin labelled 'Imports/Independents,' whose thick plastic discovers, firmly fastened with a piece of tape, could easily be re-sealed without the customer's noticing. Tired of my own collection, I plunged into the imports and began to work my way from A to Z.

Within a few weeks I came across The Last Poets' self-titled 1970 debut album, and its follow-up, *This Is Madness*, both recent reissues on the Celluloid label. Despite the sparse set-up (congas and voice), *The Last Poets* let loose a torrent of political invective, drenched in irony and full of drama, but razor sharp and ruthless. The Poets spared no one, particularly not their Black Power brethren, who were harangued for ideological self-satisfaction and a slavish devotion to drugs and sex. *This Is Madness* more explicitly cultivated the apocalyptic sensibility hinted at by the group's name, featuring that mixture of spiralling disillusionment and ecstatic hope characteristic of eschatological politics. Full of references to venereal disease, drug overdoses, napalm, genocide and the End of Time, the record nonetheless imagined a world after the "Jery holocaust" in which "man will understand man/and live in harmony and peace/and the sun will once again rise up in the East."

Months later, another friend taped me the rarest and finest Last Poets record, 1974's *At Last*. Late one night, while driving the stretch of highway between Providence and

New York with the opening track swirling around the car's interior, it genuinely seemed as if *The End* were nigh, summoned by the voice of Jalaluddin Mansur Nuriddin. Over jagged shards of piano, bass, and hi-hat, a possessed Jalal herded a psychedelic Black Armageddon.

As with all such prophecies, the Day never arrived, and one dawn followed the next. But my fascination didn't wane. Tipped by a fellow student that my university's concert agency was running a surplus that needed to be spent, I called Celluloid to invite The Last Poets up to Providence. I was put in touch with Jalal, whose desire for greater recognition was only increased by my

expression of interest in making a video documentary on The Last Poets featuring footage from the concert. A month or so later, Jalal, Sulaiman El-Hadi, and a percussionist whose name escapes me, arrived at my apartment to unload their bags before walking over to Brown University's Alumni Hall. The room was packed, and the largely white audience listened respectfully, but the performance was less than spectacular. Framed by anonymous velvet curtains, the three figures appeared tiny on the stage, shuffling awkwardly under pale yellow lights. Like ageing rappers, they fought to generate enough energy to fill the hall, and visibly struggled to connect with this polite congregation of privileged twentysomethings. Overwhelmed by the demands of live coverage, my videography was dismal, making the event seem even more staid and lacklustre.

By the next autumn, I had graduated and moved to Manhattan, where I took a job as a stockman in a secondhand bookstore near Union Square. Unloading a box of paperbacks one afternoon, I looked up to find Jalal heading toward me down the aisle. We greeted each other, and he asked me about the video project. Too embarrassed to tell the truth, I mumbled that I was still working on it and quickly changed the subject. From then on, Jalal stopped by often and we struck up an odd friendship. An autodidact with boundless linguistic cleverness, and a conspiracy theorist with a keen sense of history and politics, Jalal was an immensely fascinating companion. At once hustler and sage, he would set up meetings in Central Park to insist that I buy his own ragged copy of *Delights Of The Garden* for ten dollars and to offer lengthy interpretations of its cosmic vision. Incessantly he recalled his curriculum vitae, railing against Gil Scott-Heron and the rap community for ripping him off without acknowledgment and reminding me that he had worked with Jimi Hendrix on the single "Donella Du Fontaine", the jaltosha story of a ghetto hooker that Jalal recorded under the pseudonym "Lightnin' Rod" due to his conversion to Islam. Upon learning that I suffered from chronic back pain due to heavy lifting at work, Jalal volunteered to become my acupuncturist. I was sent off to esoteric bookstores to look for a copy of *The Yellow Emperor's Classic Of Internal Medicine* and to strange apothecaries to buy exotic herbs. Within days I had my first session with Jalal; he covered me with needles and explained the peculiar sounds of various pulses.

Uneasy with the role of apprentice that I had fallen into, I spent less and less time with Jalal, who, I think, had also come to realise that I was a poor patron. By the end of 1986 I had left New York and moved to California. Years later, I opened up a copy of *The Village Voice* to find that Jalal's former colleagues and rivals, Abiodun Ayewole and Umar Bin Hassan were touring with Lollapalooza under the Last Poets name. I imagined Jalal's anger and the increased sense of disenfranchisement and disrespect he must have felt. But I knew somehow that he would be busy refiguring the scheme as a necessary stage in his elaborate picture of universal justice. □



Jalal: the hustler and the sage

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